



DAV CALIFORNIA NEWS



CALIFORNIA
goes to Vegas

Join us for
 National Convention!
 More on Page 4

**DAV California Elects
 New Commander in
 Sparks, NV!**
 More on Page 5



COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

DAV CALIFORNIA COMMANDER
ARMANDO HERNANDEZ

We had Memorial Day at the end of May. Every year, Memorial Day holds a profound meaning for organizations like ours and its members, it is a sacred time of remembrance. As veterans and advocates, we understand more than most the weight behind a folded flag and the solemnity of a 21-gun salute. Memorial Day marks a time of reflection on brothers and sisters who never made it home. We remember the faces, the voices, and the unfinished business of what could, or would have been had they not paid the ultimate price. Their stories and memories are the legacy we carry forward.

This Memorial Day, it was my honor to join the leadership and members of chapter 1 in honoring all who paid the ultimate price. We also presented a wreath to Homer Blevins, a World War I veteran, and the first Fresno city man to make the greatest sacrifice in that war. Our chapter is honored to take its name in his honor. However, I was also impressed with the great turnout and strength of the community and volunteers who showed their respect and volunteered in countless ways to ensure that we properly honor all who perished. Thanks to social media, I was proud to see how many chapters across our state attended memorial services in their own communities. I am a firm believer that

the best way for veterans and their families to learn about the great things we do in the DAV is by being present in our local communities and showcasing the great work we do.

Speaking of that, as your new commander, I am happy to report that I am starting to make my rounds to see the great work you all do. Towards the end of May, I traveled to Ventura, CA where I was honored to install their newly elected and appointed officers. I also received a detailed list of events in Ventura that I was invited to join and attend. My travels then took me to Castle Air Museum in Atwater, CA, where I was delighted to join members of Chapter #31 to engage the community and, I'd like to think that I even helped them recruit new members. Speaking of membership, we have until Monday, June 30th, to meet our goals and be entered for a chance to win a trip to our national convention in Las Vegas.

Again, please remember to share your events with department so we can showcase the great work you do in the community. Finally, please join Auxiliary Commander Shawn Lewis, our line officers and myself in our regularly scheduled webinar, where, in case you were unable to join us at convention, you will get a chance to get to know your new line officers, and we will discuss some great topics.





DAVA COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

DAV CALIFORNIA AUXILIARY COMMANDER
SHAWN LEWIS

As we close out June, let's take a moment to remember our promises and commitments to each other and our community. This month brings us the official beginning of summer, and with it, associations with other new beginnings. We also have elected new line officers, and I want to take a moment to acknowledge the unwavering commitment of our DAVA Department of California family. Each day, through our tireless efforts, we continue to fulfill our promise to those who have served.

This season also brings with it an opportunity to reinforce our core mission: to provide support, advocacy, and a voice for our disabled veterans. It's a time to renew our dedication to ensuring every veteran in California receives the benefits, care, and dignity they so rightfully earned. Let's make this a time of impactful action, building on the foundation of camaraderie and service that defines us. Here are some programs and ideas to get you started:

- **Benefits Blitz Workshops:** Offer focused VA benefits workshops (claims, education, home loans) with DSOs and volunteers.
- **Summer Wellness Initiative:** Organize veteran health and connection activities (outdoor, exercise, mental health), potentially with local partners.
- **Youth Engagement & Mentorship:** Connect with youth to share veteran stories, teach patriotism, and explore mentorship.
- **Veterans Connect Socials:** Plan informal veteran gatherings (in-person or online) for support.
- **Community Outreach & Awareness:** Increase DAVA visibility and educate the public on veteran needs at local event information booths!

These are just brief ideas to spark our collective creativity. I encourage every unit and every member to adapt these concepts to best serve your local community.

June also has a couple of significant dates I'd like to highlight:

June 12th was the anniversary of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act and reminds us of the crucial steps taken towards equality and acknowledges the invaluable contributions of women in the armed forces.

June 27th, is National PTSD Awareness Day, which calls on us to support those impacted by trauma, raise awareness, and foster understanding and healing. Let us continue to stand tall, united in our purpose, and unwavering in our commitment to our nation's heroes. For our veterans, always.



**BREAKING
NEWS!**

HELP GROW DAVA & GET REWARDED!

We're thrilled to launch a brand-new contest designed to help our DAV Auxiliary (DAVA) family grow! This is a huge opportunity for your chapter to make an even bigger impact by bringing new DAVA units to life. Why is this so important? Because every new DAVA unit means more hands and hearts ready to support our beloved veterans and their families in communities across the nation. DAVA members are truly invaluable partners in everything we do – from advocacy to hands-on volunteering and direct support. Your Chapter Can Lead the Way! This contest is your chapter's chance to shine. By actively recruiting and helping to form a new DAVA unit you'll not only strengthen our mission but also earn well-deserved recognition and rewards.

HERE'S WHAT YOUR CHAPTER STANDS TO GAIN:

- **Full Support for Launching a New Unit:** Our team is here to guide you every step of the way. We'll help with everything from getting organized and finding new members to handling the paperwork. Our goal is to make it easy for you to launch successfully!
- **Cash Prize for Your Chapter:** The chapter that successfully charters a new DAVA unit through this contest will receive a special cash prize. It's our way of saying thank you for your hard work and commitment to expanding our family.
- **Financial Help for Initial Costs:** We'll also provide financial assistance to cover the initial costs of chartering the new DAVA unit. We want to remove any roadblocks so you can focus on bringing a new unit to fruition.

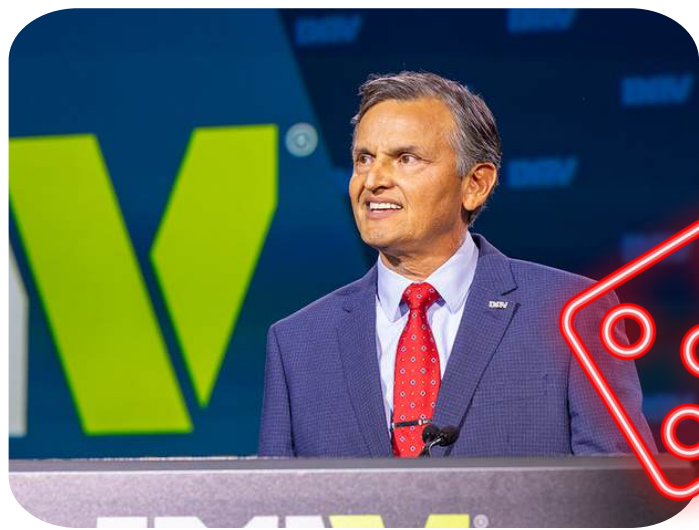
Join the Effort!

Establishing new DAVA units is vital for us to serve more veterans and their families. We truly encourage all chapters to seize this incredible opportunity. More details on contest rules, eligibility, and timelines are coming very soon. In the meantime, please start talking about this exciting prospect with your chapter members. Think about who might be a great leader to help kick off a new DAVA unit! If you need any assistance as you begin exploring this, please don't hesitate to reach out. We're here to help! We can't wait to see the positive impact of your efforts in growing the DAVA. Thank you, as always, for your unwavering commitment to our veterans.

Respectfully, Shawn Lewis

DAVacommander@davcal.org

DAV Convention in Vegas



**2025
National Convention
August 9 – 12, 2025
Held in
Las Vegas, NV**

Come out to National Convention in Las Vegas! Enjoy the fun of the city, the comradery, the education, and support our State Adjutant as he represents the organization as National Commander!

 **Click here
for details!**



DAV California Holds 103rd Convention

Thank you to everyone who made our latest convention in Sparks, NV a success! It was a privilege to host our National Guests, Sr. Vice Commander, Coleman Nee, Auxiliary National Sr. Vice Commander, Melissa Pierce, and National Caregiver Support Program Director, Ron Minter. We also heard from California VA Secretary, Lindsey Sin.

Congratulations to our awardees: Volunteer of the Year, Sr. Vice Commander, Jose Mendoza, Employee of the Year, Transportation Coordinator, Roque Blas, and Outstanding Disabled Veteran of the Year, Dr. Noel Lipana. Lindey James Judson was also recognized as Outstanding LVAP Volunteer of the Year, Susan Yip as Outstanding VBA member, and Richard Randolph as our top DSO membership recruiter.



Friday Night is usually our fun night, but this year we did something a little different. We held a showing of the film “Brothers After War” and the film’s director, Jake Rademacher, along with Dr. Noel Lipana, who helps veterans navigate trauma and moral injuries, held an emotional group discussion following the showing of the film. We also took a moment to recognize Jared Beehee of Chapter #12, who celebrated his 20th “alive anniversary” of surviving a sniper attack.

Thank you to everyone who provided helpful information throughout the convention. On the final day, elections were held. Shout out to our new Commander, Armando Hernandez, Sr. Vice Commander, Jose Mendoza, and Jr. Vice Commander, Melissa Sousa. We look forward to your leadership and thanks to Joe Skoda for your leadership this past year. Also, we said farewell to Auxiliary Adjutant, Julie Weissman-Steinbaugh, who is stepping down and passing the torch to David Bailey. Thank you for your many years of service, Julie!

Join us next year May 20-23, 2025 at the Hotel Fera in Anaheim and click  [HERE](#) to see more event photos!





PAST COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

DAV CALIFORNIA JR. PAST COMMANDER
JOSEPH S. SKODA, III, PSC

Good Morning DAV Family! Thank you for your ongoing support this past year as your Department Commander. I am so glad that I had this opportunity to grow and meet many of you doing what you do best-Serving our Veterans. It has been great meeting with leaders in Congress and throughout our state as I shared concerns and also asked for support on many veterans issues.

I am looking forward to working with our newly elected line officers, Commanders' Armando, Jose, and Melissa. They are going to do some great things for our organization. I'm also grateful for working with our Past Auxiliary Commander, David Bailey, who is now their adjutant stepping into some big shoes that Julie Weissman-Steinbaugh is leaving behind. I know that the newly elected Auxiliary Commander, Shawn Lewis and her team will continue their legacy as strong supporters of our Department.

During our Convention, I enrolled two new DAV members and an Auxiliary Member. The day after the convention I drove to Camp Pendleton to give a presentation and signed up another DAV member. I Also recently spoke about what DAV does in Cambria for Memorial Day. We MUST continue to share what the DAV does differently than the other organizations. Once we remind other veterans that they are one of us it does not take long to invite them to our family.

Though I'm no longer Commander, I am still available to speak and visit your special events. Thank you once again for your trust and support. May God Bless you and May God Bless America! The DAV Rocks because of you!

Volunteer **DRIVE** to help veterans



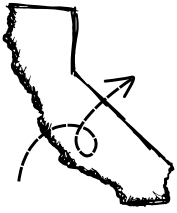
DO YOU HAVE A CURRENT VALID DRIVER'S LICENSE AND ONE DAY PER WEEK AVAILABLE? VETERANS IN CALIFORNIA NEED YOUR HELP!

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!**



*Click for
Details*



NEWS FROM AROUND THE STATE

MORONGO BASIN #60



Once again, Chapter #60 keeps busy! Here are some highlights. Chapter Service Officer and retired Transition Service Officer, Allen Pagdilao, helps Marines file their claims.



Chapter Service Officer, Allen Pagdilao gives a briefing on VA benefits and DAV services at the Formalized Marksmanship Training Center with assistance from fellow service officer Mike Smith and chapter Judge Advocate, Edward Foltz. Claims assistance was also provided.

Chapter Commander, Mike Smith, helps a veteran repair their damaged roof.



New officer installation and Commander Michael F. Smith received his gavel from Installation Officer, District 1 SEC John Hood Jr.



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



MEMORIAL #45

Chapter #45 has also stayed busy in their community. Here, District #4, SEC, Steve Sales, salutes the new flags the chapter donated for.



Yvonne Hampton and Bill Peterson join two Auxiliary members in laying a wreath at the memorial. SEC Sales pays his respects.



Chapter #45 joined the Legion, Elks lodge and Anglers Anonymous for a free fishing day and BBQ for veterans out of Avila Bay. Most caught their limit of rock fish and enjoyed the BBQ, headed up by chapter member, Yvonne Hampton. They even recruited a new member!



Chapter #45 finally has a sign, thanks to the labor of Commander and District SEC, Steve Sales, and members Eric Samway and Bill Peterson. The sign was a kind donation from Associated Traffic Safety of Paso Robles.

Chapter #45 was joined by the Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, the San Luis Obispo County Band, and the San Luis Obispo Veterans' Museum in putting together a great Memorial Day Program in the American Legion parking lot. Free lunch was provided and thanks to Steve Sales, Bill Candela and Bill Peterson for all the work setting up!



AUXILIARY UNIT #7

Unit #7, on behalf of DAVA California, delivers homemade meals monthly to the Travis AFB Fisher House prepared by Commander Shawn Lewis and delivered by Shawn Lewis and Barbara Gregory. The following is a note of appreciation from an anonymous veteran:



I'm writing to express our deepest thank-you for the very kind and generous donation of the recent meal to the Travis AFB Fisher House. Dealing with the aftermath of a TBI has been incredibly difficult, not just in terms of managing symptoms, but also in coping with feelings of shame and isolation. Your gesture means more than you know - it's a clear message to our family that the American people haven't forgotten about us and that we're not alone. Thank you again for your meaningful donation of a nutritious home-cooked meal, and we appreciate everything you do at DAV.



WANT TO SEE YOURSELF HERE?



**EMAIL US AT NEWS@DAVCAL.ORG
WITH INFO OR PHOTOS OF EVENTS
FOR US TO SHARE!**

IMPACTED BY FEDERAL DOWNSIZING? LET US KNOW!

The current administration has proposed cuts to the VA. 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!



**CLICK TO SHARE
STORY**



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 Elkelton Blvd.
Spring Valley, CA 91977

Chula Vista

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

POMONA AREA

800-238-8387
davpickupservice.org