



DAV DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA

NEWSLETTER



SEPTEMBER 2020

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DAV ADAPTS TO UNPRECEDENTED TIMES



Daniel Contreras, PSC
CEO/Adjutant, National 4th Jr. Vice Commander

This has been a confusing time for many of us. However, I feel hope when I see our chapters, membership and leaders step up and double down on their commitment to serving veterans. I didn't expect pandemic and shutdowns when I ran for national leadership, but the support of my DAV California family has meant so much to me during my first year as 4th National Jr. Vice Commander. Our organization exists because of, and for, veterans who want to help each other and it's more important in a time like this than ever.

While many of us may be feeling isolated, I want to encourage you with some of the ways DAV is working to stay as connected as ever. Since many DSO and NSO offices have also been interfered with or shut down, the national organization has set up a toll-free hotline from 8-4 Eastern Standard Time for veterans who need assistance. Put this number in your phone in case you, or a veteran you meet, needs help: **1-888-604-0234**. Another program that national has launched is the unemployment relief program. If you are a service-connected disabled veteran who has lost their job due to the current Covid-19 pandemic, you can visit **dav.org/veterans** and apply for financial relief. Although this year's national convention was cancelled and the national centennial was postponed until spring of next year, rest assured that DAV is still behind the scenes serving veterans.

On the department side, we've begun utilizing technology more in order to stay in touch while keeping one another safe. Zoom virtual conferences have been setup for chapters, and the State Executive Committee is meeting weekly with our

headquarters over Zoom as well. We will also be conducting our upcoming finance meeting, and even tentatively holding our next midwinter conference, virtually. Our department staff has been working hard to make our services more efficient and to keep serving veterans in the middle of upheaval. A veteran in need of claims assistance can now schedule an appointment with a Department Service Officer through our website. Visit **davcal.org/claims** to make an appointment with your nearest DSO. I know the use of technology comes easier to some of us than others and I want to thank all of you for being willing to adapt and grow alongside us. Our Women Veteran's Advisor, Penni L. Brown, has been conducting training on the virtual conference platform, Zoom, and will be doing so through September 9, for those of you who may need extra guidance.

Also, I want to thank Chapter #12 for their hard work collecting and storing DAV thrift store donations when stores had to close. I know their chapter has been incredibly active during this time in a variety of ways and we're very grateful for their help.

One last thing. Our department suffered a significant loss in the recent passing of Past National Commander and Past State Commander, Larry Polzin. Not only was he the chair of our department finance committee, but also a premier mentor to many of us in the organization, including myself. He taught me a lot through the years and will be missed.

Keep taking care of each other. Share with us what you're doing in your community so we can encourage each other. And, don't hesitate to reach out to us at headquarters should you need help or have questions.



COMMANDER'S MESSAGE: DAV'S ENDURING LEGACY

Mike Kerr, DAV California Commander

We are in the midst of a whirlwind year. Since our last convention, we have suffered a historic pandemic, we have witnessed a significant civil rights movement, and we have had to forgo our annual department convention. We have been forced to socially distance and, because of recent fires in our great state, have also been forced to further quarantine ourselves from the elements. With that said, our department is doing its best to stay vigilant and our great staff are doing everything they can to better the lives of the disabled veterans in our state.

On the eve of the centennial anniversary for our organization, I can only think back on our 100 years of history and how our organization has shaped and changed the landscape for our country's disabled veterans. It amazes me to think of what a century of good work from our organization has accomplished. Most people I knew as I was growing up wanted to join the armed services. They wanted to be a veteran someday. But I have yet to meet anyone who wanted to be a disabled veteran. That is why I think it is of ultimate importance that our fighting forces get the highest quality care and benefits available because they earned it. I take great pride in being your commander. I love this organization and everything we stand for. I have enjoyed every minute of being your commander this year: whether I'm going out to stand downs, chapter meetings, SEC meetings, fishing derbies, and other events.



YOU are the backbone of our department. We could not do the great work that we do in California without your great work. We frequently are contacted by local leaders looking for guidance or sharing stories of the amazing work done in your communities. I understand that this is made harder by our current climate. However, that is the very reason that you should be vigilant and continue to be a voice for disabled veterans. For it is only in these hardest of times that we are given the opportunity to show our true value. I expect that our department will continue to be an organizational leader for the next 100 years.

I hope that you are all staying safe and I hope to see you all soon.

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Ron Ringo, DAV California Chaplain,
Past National Chaplain & Trauma Specialist



I once heard that we're all in the construction business. In our relationships, we have the opportunity to build bridges of trust and friendship, just as we have occasions to construct walls of enmity and fear.

It's simpler to do things for people we know will appreciate our efforts. It requires courage and maturity to extend ourselves, not knowing whether our kindness will be received or our weaknesses accepted. However, when we do the work of bridge-building, we begin to build trust, test our own mettle, enlarge our capacity and challenge our own established approaches.

Times of upheaval can show us the importance of these bridges in our lives. Some of us experienced this first hand in Iraq and other wars, and many are experiencing this now with COVID, fires, riots, hurricanes and other calamities. Upon returning home from Operation Iraqi Freedom, I heard from many of those around me that they didn't want to take simple things for granted anymore. Life, and the people we share it with feel more precious. However, the joy of reunions and our enthusiasm for life's simple beauty can feel frustratingly short-lived.

In his book, *The Road Less Traveled*, M. Scott Peck talks about the phenomena of this "honeymoon phase." In our relationships, the initial excitement and warmth fades as the honeymoon ends and we return home to responsibilities, goals and jobs. Though this progression is natural and healthy, the lessened closeness can leave us feeling lonely, fearful or rejected. Some people bounce from relationship to relationship, seeking the euphoria of beginnings, but it always passes. This can feel like the love has died, when in fact, the real work of loving hadn't even started. When the honeymoon ends, the relationship deepens as the business of helping and serving one another throughout life's daily difficulties begins. The bridges that we build, at home and in the world, require ongoing efforts to reach out and connect even in the face of disappointments. Do we want to build walls or bridges?

We would be wise to write our hurts in sand and carve our blessings in stone. We may not

understand why our days feel full of struggles, but we still have a responsibility to be kind to those around us. So, as life keeps hitting us in the face with difficulties, I hope you'll remember things can come and go, but your relationship with God and those He has given you are the most important. Until next time, may God bless you, bless the DAV and continue to bless our nation.

DAV SAYS NO TO PROP 21



As DAV California, we have vowed never to leave our fellow veterans behind. But, our state also has a housing shortage, which creates extremely high rents. This crisis directly affects the most vulnerable among us, homeless or at-risk veterans, many of whom suffer with service-connected disabilities and/or mental health issues that interfere with their ability to maintain employment. We know that this issue is not new and that California's lack of affordable housing has harmed veterans for far too long. So why does the DAV Department of California oppose California's Prop 21? For the simple reason that it will further decrease the amount of housing. By creating an inconsistent and unpredictable patchwork of local ordinances, Prop 21 will prevent critical affordable housing development, and drive rents and housing costs up even higher. It will also encourage landlords to take rental properties off the market and convert them into condos and townhomes, further reducing the rental housing supply and worsening the crisis. Since 2009, VA and HUD, with the support of more than 6,000 community agencies, including the DAV, have helped an estimated 200,000 veterans find permanent, supportive housing and access to high-quality VA health care. We will continue to fight for affordable housing for veterans in California, but Prop 21 isn't the answer we need.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR RECRUITMENT ALL-STARS!

It's been an unusual year. We were not able to recognize all of our chapter commanders whose chapters met recruitment goals and our top membership recruiters in-person as we usually would. The current pandemic also creates a challenging environment for membership recruitment. We greatly appreciate those of you who still rose to the challenge and met their membership recruitment goals. Great job and keep up the good work! Thank you for helping to ensure a strong future for the DAV! The commanders of these chapters and these individuals received Commander's Club coins in recognition but we want to take a moment to appreciate them here as well!



San Bernardino Chapter #12
Long Beach Chapter #17
Ray Clark Chapter #35
Simi Valley Chapter #55
Bruce Patterson Chapter #68
Indio Chapter #78
Santa Maria Chapter #82
General J. W. Stilwell Chapter #85
Lompoc Chapter #91
Dick Bilyeu Chapter #93
Lillian Bushnell Chapter #123



Member with most DAV Auxiliary Recruits:

Leigh Polzin
with 13 new Auxiliary members

SEC with most DAV Recruits:

Suey Lee, District #10
with 10 new members.

Member with the most DAV Recruits:

Juan (Carlos) Gallardo & Oscar Olguin,
with 57 new members

IN REMEMBRANCE: LARRY POLZIN



DAV Past National Commander, California Past State Commander and Chair of the Dept. Finance Committee, Larry Polzin, passed away June 22, 2020. A native of Flagler, Colorado, Polzin enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1961 and served until his medical retirement at the rank of corporal in 1966. Polzin became a life member of DAV in 1971 and was an active member of Chapter 73 in Woodland Hills, CA. Over the decades, he served in

numerous leadership roles within his chapter and at the state and national levels. In 1972, Polzin joined DAV's professional staff as a national service officer in Los Angeles. His career spanned more than 25 years of service to disabled veterans and their families before his retirement in 1998. He served as commander of the DAV Department of California in 1996, was elected to DAV's national line in 2007 and was elected national commander

at 2012 convention in Las Vegas. "Larry was a truly dedicated individual who never stopped working for the betterment of disabled veterans and their families," said National Adjutant Marc Burgess. In addition to being a great leader in our organization, "Larry was a premier mentor to many in our organization and was like family to many, myself included" said California Adjutant, Daniel Contreras, PSC.

SPOTLIGHT ON CHAPTER #12: VETERAN EXPLORATION GARDEN

The sun is shining and the weather is sweet at DAV Ch. 12's Veteran Exploration Garden. Located in San Bernardino at Speicher Park, the VEG is designed as a holistic treatment center that includes a garden, monuments, picnic areas, veteran center, horseshoe pit and fruit trees. On June 2nd, Commander Jose Mendoza organized about 20 volunteers to help clean up the facility and I had the pleasure of being in attendance. We

worked together for a few hours in the morning and when it started to warm up, we began preparing for lunch. Ch. 12's world famous chef, Alonzo Lewis, happened to be on the grill that day and cooked delicious ribs and chicken for all of us who came. Many veterans brought their families along. It was a great day to be alive and enjoy camaraderie with my fellow chapter members and veterans. The VEG is open on Tues and Thurs 8-12 in the morning and by special appointment. If you are interested in learning more about the Veteran Exploration Garden, you can contact Chapter 12 at **(909) 571-5995**. We'd love to see you there! Address for Veterans Exploration Garden: **2501 Pacific St. Highland, Ca. 92404**



Story Submitted By:
Joseph Moseley
Sr. Vice Commander

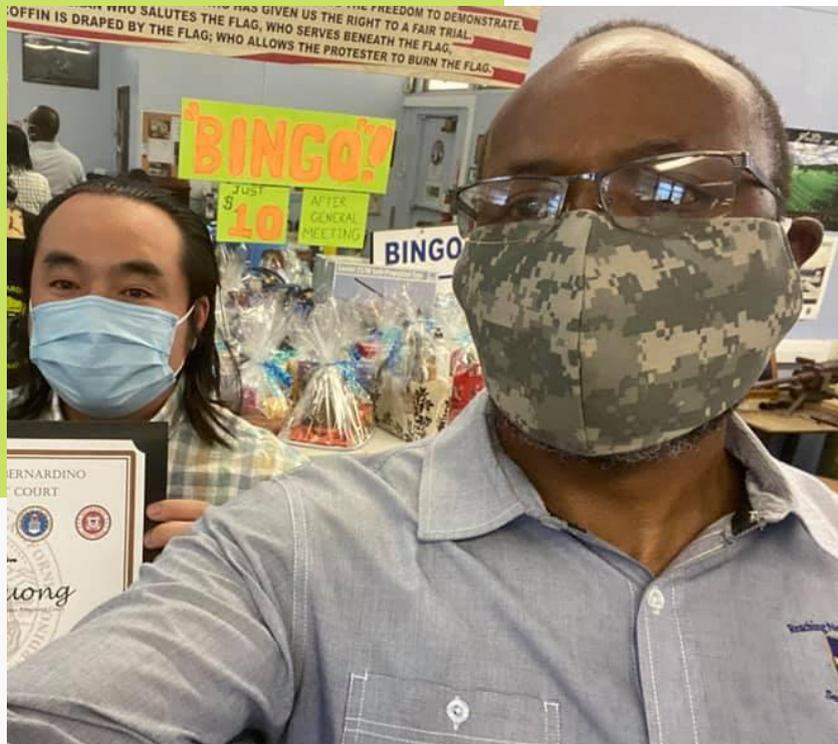
SPOTLIGHT ON CHAPTER #12, CONT: SERGEANT MAJOR COKER & CHAPTER 12 CELEBRATE VETERANS' COURT GRADUATES

The United States military prides itself in creating warriors capable of engaging in combat anywhere at a moment's notice. It is a culture that many of us found exciting, however, the psychological ideology a soldier adopts to survive combat may not serve a veteran well when they arrive back home. Some veterans become angry or addicted to substances as they struggle to adapt to this transition which can lead to broken relationships, jail-time, and sadly, even suicide.

Should society forget the accomplishments of these veterans and label them as nonconformists or troubled beyond help? Are these lost veterans incapable of redemption or living as productive members of society? In response to questions like these, DAV lifetime member, Sergeant Major Coker, would respond with a loud "Hell no." SM Coker has spent over 30 years in the US Army protecting soldiers from poor decision-making and helping them focus on productive goals.

He feels that veterans often make mistakes, especially in transitioning careers, but should not be judged simply as regular civilians, but as former soldiers of the US Armed Forces. This "no soldier left behind" mentality inspired him to advocate for "Veteran's Court" here in California and to be a liaison between the VA and judicial system. "It's the right thing to do," says SM Coker, "I've been doing this my whole life. I love taking care of my brothers and sisters. They earned this and it's our job to get them back on track by using the resources that are already available to them."

The VA Health Care System has programs that many veterans are eligible for which include but are not limited to: Anger Management, Substance Abuse Treatment and Psychological Counseling for PTSD and MST. SM Coker further explains that "the veteran who broke the law by drinking, fighting, using drugs or acting out in risky behavior needs a court, a judge and a



probation officer that recognizes his/her military service and is familiar with, and utilizes, VA resources available to help in their rehabilitation." If a veteran qualifies and is given the opportunity to have Veterans Court, they are given a pathway for redemption that often includes a 12/18-month program based upon their individual issues. Upon successful completion of their rehabilitative program, the veteran will have all fines, fees and charges dismissed from their case and in many circumstances, given a chance at an occupation within the VA system that correlates with their previous military occupation. During this time of COVID-19, SM Coker has partnered with DAV Chapter #12 of San Bernardino to host a Veterans Court Graduation at which veterans who completed their sentencing were honored and recognized. The ceremony included recognizing each veteran graduate with a certificate of achievement and free lunch for the graduates and their families.

The pride of those in attendance was noticeable and for the veteran graduates, it was an empowering and redemptive moment. To DAV members like SM Coker, we salute your integrity and drive to never give up on a fellow soldier. Your ongoing advocacy for veterans is an excellent example of DAV's mission in action.

Story Submitted By: Joseph Moseley, Sr. Vice Commander



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: SHIRRELL MCCAREY

In these troubling times, it is easy to become emotionally charged and even enraged at what we see in the world. COVID-19 is keeping us in our homes while images of police brutality in the streets seem common. I know that we all have thoughts and opinions, but what can we really do to make a difference? This confusion can lead to despair and left me feeling at a loss about what to do.

Then I had a talk with Shirrell McCarey, a combat veteran, multi-racial woman and member of DAV Chapter #72 in Victorville. She has been busy bringing supplies to needy veterans across California from Palo Alto and Baker to Lynwood, Corona and more. From food to bathroom supplies, mainly purchased at personal cost, with the help of some fellow women veterans from AmVets Post 77, she's hand delivered help to veterans' doors.

She reminded me that "this is what our DAV mission is all about. We as veterans need to take care of each other no matter race, ethnicity or age. We need to have each other's back no matter what. We all got past this racial divide in the military and we shouldn't let it interfere with what we are supposed to be doing now. Giving, compassion and caring about one another is why we are in this organization."



During these uncertain times, veterans need to be able to count on one another now more than ever. Shirrell is only one DAV member, but she has managed to make a significant impact in our veteran community. I admire her tenacity and

resilience to stay the course of the DAV mission and not be discouraged.

I hope her story will encourage you as it did me, and motivate you to keep going and continue helping one another. And, to Shirrell McCarey, we salute you for your values and service to this country and to our fellow veterans in need.

Story Submitted by:
Joseph Moseley, Sr. Vice Commander

HELPING VETERANS?

If you are then you could already qualify as a volunteer through the Local Veterans Assistance Program. Now, signing up as an LVAP volunteer is easier than ever with the DAV California App. Not only that, but volunteers can also track and log their hours quickly, in real time, within a few button taps. This app is available for iOS and Google Play and allows users to track their volunteerism or even sign up a new DAV member. We encourage all of you to download and use this app if you can as it helps us at headquarters to streamline the process of receiving, tracking, and reporting volunteer hours to DAV National. Search for "DAV California" in App stores. Please use it and share it, because when we are efficient with our time, we are able to do more in service to veterans in California!

🔍 dav california



DAV California

Business



WE HAVE A WOMEN VETERANS ADVISOR!

Commander of Chapter #91 and Women Veteran's Advisor, Penni Lo'Vette Brown, has a new email address. We want our department to represent all of our veterans in California. If you have questions, comments or suggestions pertaining to women veteran's issues, reach out to Penni at womenvets@davcal.org!



SOME BITS OF GOOD NEWS

Our Department Service Officer, Mario Flores, recognized Mary Golden, the Program Manager for VA Voluntary Services at the Fresno VA, with a plaque and some Baskin Robbins. In the midst of the upheaval brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, Mary Golden and her team went above and beyond and played an essential role in getting our organization re-established at the Fresno VA hospital. Serving veterans can be complicated work, but with the aid and partnership of VA employees like Mary, we can accomplish more together. It takes a village! Thank you to Mary Golden and her team for your great work and for serving veterans alongside us!



DAV Chapter #85 Commander, Patricia Hendrix, Department Service Officer, Michael A. Silver, Jr. and Deputy Executive Director of the Veteran Transition Center, Jack Murphy, attended and helped at a food drive and marketplace for veterans, service members, and their families. During this event they were able to make over 100 contacts with veterans and service members concerning their benefits and the food drive provided food for over 300 veterans' families.



DAV Vietnam-Era veterans in Vacaville pose with the Vietnam War flag for the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War.

From left to right, the two men holding the flag are Bob Olmstead and Bill Blas

Middle row is: Kim McClane, James Dickerson, and David Trimmingham

Back row is: Al King; Bob Ford, and Mel Greene

NEWS FROM DEPARTMENT

Be on the Lookout!

DAV Department of California will be releasing a Legislative Update Newsletter soon!



Need Claims Assistance?

Now you can make an appointment with a Department Service Officer online! Visit davcal.org/claims to schedule an appointment with your nearest DSO.

Have questions about DAV Department of California?

Now you can chat with DAV California headquarters staff on our website at davcal.org using the chat program, Tidio. Find what you're looking for quicker and easier. Check it out next time you have a question.



Attention: Veterans!

Have you or a veteran you know suffered property damage or displacement due to the recent wildfires in California?

DAV wants to help!

Reach out to hq@davcal.org to inquire about disaster relief

Veterans do not have to be DAV members to qualify.

CONNECT WITH US!

How have you or your chapter been helping veterans in your community recently? We want to know! Email us at news@davcal.org with your stories (and photos) !

SUPPORT DAV'S THRIFT STORES!



**NORTHERN
CALIFORNIA**

800-238-8387
donatedav.org



**FRESNO
AREA**

559-237-0273
davcharities.com

Do you have clothing or household items to clear out? Reach out to your nearest DAV thrift operation and set up a pick up today! Your donations help provide injured and ill veterans with rehabilitative services and financial support through the DAV California Rehabilitation Foundation.!

**POMONA
AREA**

800-238-8387
donatedav.org

**SAN DIEGO
AREA**

800-894-2486
davgveteransthiftstores.com