Hope Lives
DUE TO THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC WE CONTINUE TO CEASE ALL GATHERINGS. TO THIS END I AM SORRY TO SAY THAT OUR MAY 5TH BOARD AND MAY 14TH MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS ARE CANCELLED. ADDITIONALLY, THE ANNUAL ELECTION WILL BE POSTPONED AND THE MEMORIAL SITE SPRING CLEAN UP DAY IS ON HOLD UNTIL WE ARE GIVEN THE “ALL CLEAR’ FROM THE GOVERNMENT.

THANK YOU.
VAL GATTO
CHAPTER 20 PRESIDENT
I hope this newsletter finds you safe and healthy. Needless to say, this has been a trying time for people around the world. Every day, we learn more about the virus and how we can protect ourselves and our families, while also contribute to slowing its rapid spread. For many of us, practicing social distancing has been a difficult burden to bear, as we temporarily suspend many of the activities that make life worth living.

While it’s true that the nightly news continues to deliver grim updates to our situation, there are always stories that inspire hope. We hear stories of people volunteering to pick up groceries for the immuno-compromised, or organizations like Food link stepping up to meet critical needs in our region. We read anecdotes of people voluntarily surrendering their supplies, including toilet paper, to those who need them more. Sometimes, in dark moments like these, we truly see the best in people.

As our community continues to grapple with Covid-19, we must remember that our nation has gone through fires before and emerged stronger. I am confident that this time will be no different.

If there is anything that VVA Chapter 20 can do for you, please do not hesitate to ask. I look forward to getting back to normal business in the weeks and months to come.

Sincerely,

Val Gatto
President
VVA Chapter 20
Hello, my fellow Vietnam veteran brothers and sisters. My name is Larry (Gunny) Strassner. I am a “Lifetime” member of VVA Chapter 20. I, sadly and unfortunately, have not been able to attend very many Thursday evening membership meetings due to personal scheduling conflicts. I do try to keep up with some things going on at the Chapter and nationally through the newsletter and the BTL.

I served in the US Marine Corps from 1966 to 1972. I went to “Boot Camp” at Paris Island, SC, Infantry training at Camp LeJeune and then to “Avionics School” in Jacksonville Fla.. My first permanent duty station was Marine Corps Aircraft Station, Beaufort, SC attached to Headquarters and Maintenance Squadron 32, Marine Aircraft Group 32 of the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing. From Dec. 1967 to March of 1969, I served with VMFA 323 (Death Rattlers) Squadron, MAG 13 of the 1st MAW in Chu Lai, Vietnam. My Military Occupational Specialty was Avionics, Aircraft Electrician for various “tail hook” jet aircraft and helicopters. My expertise was with the Phantom II F4-B. A couple of highlights of my tour in Vietnam were being able to see two Bob Hope USO shows and participate in two “Tet” offensives. I returned stateside and was attached to VMAT-102, MCCRTG-10, 3rd MAW, Fleet Marine Force Pac, MCAS, Yuma, Arizona as a Staff Non-Commissioned Officer, helping train Marines on A4 Skyhawk aircraft. I was released from active duty in 1970 as an E5 Sergeant, transferred to active reserve with the Radio Relay & Construction Co. of the 12th Comm. Bn., FMF, USMCR training center here in Rochester, NY. I was planning on “shipping over” but promptly changed my mind just days after attaining the rank of Gunnery Sergeant E7 when they told me that I’d be going back to Nam in about a year. The rank and $5800 bonus just weren’t enough incentive, so I got out. Hence, the nick name “Gunny”.

In May of this year, I celebrate my 33rd anniversary of my 39th Birthday. I am married with three daughters and four grandkids. All of them have moved away from Rochester which gives me a super excuse to go “visit”, vacationing in the beautiful south east (Nashville, TN and Huntsville, AL) as well as the Albany area throughout the year. In 2001, I retired from Delphi Products as a Manufacturing Engineering supervisor, (formerly the Rochester Products Div. of GM) but returned to Delphi on a contract basis for the following 9 years for a total of 41 years at the same company. This experience only enhanced my record keeping experience and prepared me for future challenges.

I have also been blessed to have been able to keep quite active over the years. I basically don’t like to let grass grow under my feet. From about 1999, for about 12 to 14 years I had the pleasure of leading the design and construction of theater sets for Blackfriars, Geva, RAPA and other semi-professional theater companies but most of all, I enjoyed doing this for the Greece Athena Middle and High School productions yearly. These were phenomenal productions where I was able to teach as well as learn from everyone around me. During the end of this time frame and beyond (about 9 years), I was privileged to be a volunteer for Honor Flight Rochester. I was on the leadership board and the director of “Ground Events” and “Speaker’s Bureau”. Believe me, this was a full-time job and is one of the most rewarding things I’ve ever done. This too, was another record keeping and scheduling challenge. In 2018, I stepped aside from Leadership positions with HFR but still volunteer.
I currently hold the offices of “Sgt. At Arms” for our American Legion Post 468 and “Quartermaster” for our VFW post 4658.

Again, keeping busy and not wanting to let grass grow under my feet (beside the fact that I was quite concerned to hear about our chapter possibly deactivating and VVA changing our name, I was hoping that I could help fill the need as VVA Chapter 20 Secretary.

Thank you,
Larry (Gunny) Strassner
Remembering Our Fallen Heroes
Born in May

Website - http://rochestervietnammemorial.org/

Neidermeier, Thomas David 5-1-1947
Petramalo, Thomas 5-6-1936
Quinn, Ronald Gene 5-6-1943
McCarthy Jr., Carl R. 5-6-1950
Pringle, James Edward 5-8-1949
Parker Jr., George Joseph 5-10-1941
Daniels, Rex Martin 5-10-1950
Beltran, Frank Joseph 5-11-1948
Kleinhaus, Lawrence C. 5-14-1947
Ludwig, Larry George 5-15-1947
Roczen, Alexander Anthony 5-16-1947
Henderson, Robert Caufeld 5-17-1947
Schumacher, Jeffrey David 5-17-1950
Cartwright, Thomas Clark 5-18-1943
Reed, David N. 5-28-1951
Redding, Walter Lee 5-30-1949

Memorial Tours & Presentations
Persons interested in on-site tours or presentations at schools or organizations, contact Chuck Macaluso at 585-225-8288 or Chuckmac66@yahoo.com

Friends of the Memorial
To be placed on the volunteer contact list, contact Chuck Macaluso at 585-225-8288 or Chuckmac66@yahoo.com
VETERANS WALK COMMITTEE
154 Mendota Drive
Rochester, New York 14626

From:
Name: ____________________________
Address: __________________________
City/Zip: __________________________
Phone: ____________________________

The Veterans Walk Committee of Chapter 20, VVA wants to thank you for your purchase of a personalized, engraved paver brick.

Each paver brick (4” x 8”) can have from one to three lines of engraved information. The cost will be $50.00 per brick. Make checks or money order payable to:
VVA Chapter 20, Veterans Walk

The engraved line(s) can include any of the following information:

- Full name
- Branch of service, rank
- Dates of service (1967-1969, etc.)
- Conflict (WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Persian Gulf, etc.)

Please print the information you would like engraved on the brick below. (Maximum of 14 letters/numbers, including spaces per line).

1. __________________________________________________________________________
2. __________________________________________________________________________
3. __________________________________________________________________________

Return the completed form to the - Veterans Walk Committee, c/o Chuck Macaluso, 154 Mendota Drive, Rochester, New York 14626.
Include: Payment and “Proof of Service” for above recipient.

Please Note: Engraved bricks will be installed prior to Memorial Day and Veterans Day (twice annually).
Questions please call Chuck or Joan Macaluso as 585-225-8288
There are currently no new reports from the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), the National League of Families and the DOD on any servicemen recently recovered, returned and identified this month. The total number of Americans who are still missing from the Vietnam War still stands at 1587.

There are reports of the recoveries and identifications of individuals from the following wars:

- 2nd Lt. Earl W. Smith Jr. US Army Air Corps was lost August 20, 1943 in Papua. He was accounted for on March 24, 2020.
- Pvt. Wayne M. Evens, US Army was lost July 19, 1942 in Cabanatuan, Philippines. He was accounted for on April 6, 2020.
- Sgt. Donald D. Stoddard, US Marine Corps was lost November 22, 1943 at Tarawa. He was accounted for on April 6, 2020.
- Sgt. Billy V. Rodgers, US Army was lost December 2, 1950 in North Korea. He was accounted for on April 10, 2020.

WE WILL BE NEVER GIVE UP HOPE UNTIL THEY ARE ALL ACCOUNTED FOR.
WELCOME HOME BROTHERS
Membership Update
Mike General Membership Chair

Chapter 20 Membership currently is at 622 members and AVVA is at 40 members as of 02/29/20. Membership has been growing slow (only 1 new members in the last month), Need your help in recruiting new members. Don’t forget to renew on time. Don’t let your membership expire. We had 0 members who did not renew this last month and members who passed away.

Please Renew Your Membership!
Only Life Memberships are available $50.00

If you a renewing as a “Life Member”, please remember to include a copy of your DD-214 with your application.

When you have an Address Change, Phone Number change please notify Mike General @ (mwgeneral@aol.com) so we can keep our Roster up to date and notify National.

Need your help in recruiting new members.
Membership Applications are available on our Website or by contacting me. (mwgeneral@aol.com)

Chapter 20 Membership is open to U.S. Veterans who served active duty (other than training purposes) in the Republic of Vietnam between February 28, 1961 and May 07, 1975, or any duty location between August 05, 1964 and May 07, 1975.

Membership includes a subscription to our award-winning newspaper The BTL, and The VVA Veteran, bringing you updates on issues and legislation affecting veterans, as well as unique articles on the people, places, and history of the Vietnam experience.

Associate Membership is open to anyone; you do not need to be a Veteran.

We are offering an “Honorary Membership” to Chapter 20 to all spouses who husbands have passed away(Must have been an Active Member). If you know of someone who has lost their loved one, please contact Mike General.

Mike
Member Application

For new members, print this membership form and complete, then mail with your payment and a copy of the DD214 form. Renewal members may complete and print the form and mail it with your payment. Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter #20, P.O. Box 12580, Rochester, NY 14692

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As of October 20, 2018, there will be one paid class of membership.

1. **LIFE MEMBERSHIP:** $50.00
2. All 3-year members who have paid $50 will automatically become a life member.
3. All one-year members will continue as an individual 1-year member until their membership expires, one-year members will then be required to pay $50.00 to remain a member of VVA.
Membership Request

I am asking all members of Chapter 20 to send me (via E-Mail [mwgeneral@aol.com](mailto:mwgeneral@aol.com)) your current:

1. Name
2. Address
3. Phone Number

This step is necessary so My Roster and National’s Roster can be updated.

Please Renew Your Membership on time!

Mike
Well, what a difference a pandemic can make, eh! Seriously, I mean no disrespect to COVID-19. By no means can what is happening in our daily lives be termed frivolous or funny. Indeed, it is serious and can be deadly too this scourge of Covid-19. That being said, I can not ever remember a period of time where so much has been changed in almost everything I did on a daily basis. I took a lot for granted. Everyday activities that I felt were pretty routine, perhaps running smoothly or on autopilot. Now not so much. I certainly don’t feel that way anymore. Do you?

For me, this past Easter holiday certainly had an unforgettable feeling about it. I was home with Linda, watching Mass and thinking how strange this was, not being able to attend Church in person. I could only recall one Easter holiday EVER being celebrated without sitting in a Church, and that was Vietnam. I understand why, but sure don’t want this to be the norm. Change is hard, even if it is for our own good!

Another thought came to me along with the Easter holiday quiet reflections. Just like the Thanksgiving holidays, where there is so much to be thankful for, I was grateful too. Grateful, for having family and friends healthy and safe no matter how far away. Very grateful, for all the doctors, nurses, EMT’s, lab techs, and first responders, doing their jobs to protect me and my family. Grateful, for the store workers, delivery and logistic workers who are working to keep stores supplied and clean. I’m sure there are more that could be added to this list, I don’t mean to slight anyone who is under a lot of stress during this pandemic to keep me and my family safe. I’m grateful and bless them all for their commitment.

Items of interest, the VA has begun a process of eliminating a long standing 48-hour review period by VSO’s to look for errors in veteran’s claims. In another action, the VA will send out letters concerning Emergency Medical Billing Claims that were denied and how to receive reimbursement for such. The new world of Comp and Pen exams during the COVID-19 pandemic, how to proceed. VA’s tele-health programs for mental health and connecting to services. Finally, the Mayo Clinic and FYI’s about diabetes, a very dangerous illness that would be complicated with COVID-19 circulating about. Please stay healthy, safe, and practice the CDC guidelines for COVID-19.

Respectfully submitted by,
Jerry McDermott
Chairman Health Affairs
Diabetes care: 10 ways to avoid complications

Diabetes care is a lifelong responsibility. Consider 10 strategies to prevent diabetes complications.

By Mayo Clinic Staff

Diabetes is a serious disease. Following your diabetes treatment plan takes round-the-clock commitment. But your efforts are worthwhile. Careful diabetes care can reduce your risk of serious — even life-threatening — complications.

Here are 10 ways to take an active role in diabetes care and enjoy a healthier future.

Members of your diabetes care team — doctor or primary care provider, diabetes nurse educator, and dietitian, for example — can help you learn the basics of diabetes care and offer support along the way. But it's up to you to manage your condition.

Learn all you can about diabetes. Make healthy eating and physical activity part of your daily routine. Maintain a healthy weight.

Monitor your blood sugar, and follow your doctor's instructions for managing your blood sugar level. Take your medications as directed by your doctor. Ask your diabetes treatment team for help when you need it.

Smoking increases your risk of type 2 diabetes and the risk of various diabetes complications, including:

- Reduced blood flow in the legs and feet, which can lead to infections, ulcers and possible removal of a body part by surgery (amputation)
- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Eye disease, which can lead to blindness
- Nerve damage
- Kidney disease
- Premature death

Talk to your doctor about ways to help you stop smoking or using other types of tobacco.

Like diabetes, high blood pressure can damage your blood vessels. High cholesterol is a concern, too, since the damage is often worse and more rapid when you have diabetes. When these conditions team up, they can lead to a heart attack, stroke or other life-threatening conditions.

Eating a healthy, reduced-fat diet and exercising regularly can go a long way toward controlling high blood pressure and cholesterol. Your doctor may also recommend taking prescription medication, if necessary.
Schedule two to four diabetes checkups a year, in addition to your yearly physical and routine eye exams.

During the physical, your doctor will ask about your nutrition and activity level and look for any diabetes-related complications — including signs of kidney damage, nerve damage and heart disease — as well as screen for other medical problems.

Your eye care specialist will check for signs of retinal damage, cataracts and glaucoma.

Diabetes makes it more likely you'll get certain illnesses. Routine vaccines can help prevent them. Ask your doctor about:

- **Flu vaccine.** A yearly flu vaccine can help you stay healthy during flu season as well as prevent serious complications from the flu.

- **Pneumonia vaccine.** Sometimes the pneumonia vaccine requires only one shot. If you have diabetes complications or you're age 65 or older, you may need a booster shot.

- **Hepatitis B vaccine.** The hepatitis B vaccine is recommended for adults with diabetes who haven't previously received the vaccine and are younger than 60. If you're age 60 or older and have never received the hepatitis B vaccine, talk to your doctor about whether it's right for you.

- **Other vaccines.** Stay up to date with your tetanus shot (usually given every 10 years). Your doctor may recommend other vaccines as well.

  - Diabetes may leave you prone to gum infections. Brush your teeth at least twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste, floss your teeth once a day and schedule dental exams at least twice a year. Call your dentist if your gums bleed or look red or swollen.

  - High blood sugar can reduce blood flow and damage the nerves in your feet. Left untreated, cuts and blisters can lead to serious infections. Diabetes can lead to pain, tingling or loss of sensation in your feet.

  To prevent foot problems:

  - Wash your feet daily in lukewarm water. Avoid soaking your feet, as this can lead to dry skin.

  - Dry your feet gently, especially between the toes.

  - Moisturize your feet and ankles with lotion or petroleum jelly. Do not put oils or creams between your toes — the extra moisture can lead to infection.

  - Check your feet daily for calluses, blisters, sores, redness or swelling.

  - Consult your doctor if you have a sore or other foot problem that doesn't start to heal within a few days. If you have a foot ulcer — an open sore — see your doctor right away.

  - Don't go barefoot, indoors or outdoors.

    If you have diabetes and other cardiovascular risk factors, such as smoking or high blood pressure, your doctor may recommend taking a low dose of aspirin every day to help reduce your risk of heart attack and stroke. If you don't have additional cardiovascular risk factors, the risk of bleeding from aspirin use likely outweighs any benefits of aspirin use. Ask your doctor whether daily aspirin therapy is appropriate for you, including which strength of aspirin would be best.

    Alcohol can cause high or low blood sugar, depending on how much you drink and whether you eat at the same time. If you choose to drink, do so only in moderation, which means no
more than one drink a day for women of all ages and men older than 65 and two drinks a day for men age 65 and younger.

Always drink with a meal or snack, and remember to include the calories from any alcohol you drink in your daily calorie count. Also, be aware that alcohol can lead to low blood sugar later, especially for people who use insulin.

If you're stressed, it's easy to neglect your usual diabetes care routine. To manage your stress, set limits. Prioritize your tasks. Learn relaxation techniques.

Get plenty of sleep. And above all, stay positive. Diabetes care is within your control. If you're willing to do your part, diabetes won't stand in the way of an active, healthy life.

Show References


Emergency Medical Bill Claims
Update 08: Lawsuit Reimbursement Eligibility Letters

More than one million veterans will soon be receiving instructions from Veterans Affairs officials on how to check if they are eligible for thousands of dollars in medical cost reimbursements as part of a court decision last fall. Starting 13 APR, department staffers will send letters to tens of thousands of veterans who were rejected for financial relief in recent years for bills they received for non-department emergency medical care. That move comes over VA objections concerning an ongoing lawsuit over the issue, which could add billions in new costs to the department’s budget.

Last fall, the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims ruled that the department’s current regulation for veterans who seek non-department medical care violates existing federal law. They ordered VA officials to re-examine more than 72,000 rejected claims and update their rules, arguing the department has a responsibility to cover the costs of the unexpected medical visits. The case centers on veterans whose unpaid emergency room expenses were denied by VA officials under existing policies. The plaintiffs’ both had part of their bills paid for by other insurance, but were left with several thousand in personal costs. VA officials argued in court that they did not need to handle the unpaid balance because the veterans were primarily covered under other insurance plans. The court ruled that violates both existing law and past legal precedent.

A VA Inspector General report last summer found $716 million in improperly processed payments in cases involving veterans who sought medical care outside the department’s health system in 2017, including about $53 million that should have been refunded under existing rules. VA officials are considering appealing the ruling, and asked that any action on the cases be postponed until higher courts weigh in on the matter. But earlier this month, the appeals court rejected that motion and ordered letters be sent out starting 13 APR. Advocates praised the decision. “Hundreds of thousands of veterans affected by this class action have suffered far too long and endured severe financial hardships due to VA’s wrongful handling of their reimbursement claims,” said said Bart Stichman, executive director of the National Veterans Legal Services Program.

VA officials have estimated that full compliance with the court order could cost between $1.8 billion and $6.5 billion. Reimbursements may date back to cases decided by the department in 2016. The ruling also invalidated all VA decisions denying reimbursement for deductibles and co-insurance costs not covered in emergency visits at non-VA facilities. The letters come as many veterans are facing new debts related to work interruptions and other financial problems related to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. However, processing of the claims is likely to take several months, and may be stalled further by ongoing legal appeals. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | April 13, 2020 ++]
Veterans of Foreign Wars National Commander William “Doc” Schmitz called it “despicable” and “inconceivable” that Department of Veterans Affairs Undersecretary for Benefits Dr. Paul Lawrence intends to eliminate the accredited veterans service officer (VSO) 48-hour review period for claims effective April 30. “The VFW strongly opposes the repeal of the 48-hour review period in reviewing VA decisions for accuracy, as this is a final quality control check that we perform on behalf of our veterans to ensure that their rating decisions are correct the first time,” said Schmitz.

Currently VSOs have the opportunity and the responsibility to review proposed VA rating decisions to ensure that all claimed conditions have been addressed and properly adjudicated prior to VA finalizing its rating decision and sending notification to the veteran. For decades, VA has allotted VSOs 48 hours to review the applicable laws and regulations that were applied to the claim. During this time, VSO representatives can go back to VA to seek corrections before each claim goes to promulgation. This quality review allows VSOs to give the claim an independent quality control check before it is reviewed by VA and undergoes VA’s internal quality review process.

The VSO review process is outlined in VA’s claims processing manual, M21-1. Per M21-1 I.3.B.3.a “the purpose of VSO review is to identify any clear errors or matters of clarification that require significant discussion, and/or correction prior to promulgation.” VA formerly allowed this same review for VSOs in a paper-based system by utilizing the “ratings table” at each VA Regional Office that gave the VSO the opportunity to physically review the claims folder for accuracy. Once the VSO was satisfied that the rating was correct or held conversations with the rater to discuss actions, the VSO signed off on the rating signifying concurrence and it was then forwarded for promulgation.

“To paraphrase former Administrator of the Veterans Administration, Gen. Omar Bradley, ‘We are dealing with [veterans], not procedures; with their problems, not ours,’” said Schmitz. “This philosophy should always guide VA in its transactions with veterans. Instead, VA’s proposal to eliminate the 48-hour review puts process before people.” VA’s decision to suspend the 48-hour review period for VSOs will only continue to further erode the veteran’s right to competent representation in benefit claims before VA. The ability of VSOs to advocate on behalf of our clients has already been diminished by VA’s continued rush to implement new business processes that appear to suit the needs of VA but will only result in additional appeals and disappointment with the claims process.

“The VFW remains committed to our veterans’ advocacy mission – a century-old mission that predates VA’s existence and management of veterans’ benefit programs,” said VFW National Veterans Service Director Ryan Gallucci. “The VFW compels VA Undersecretary for Benefits Dr. Paul Lawrence to reconsider his directive to eliminate the 48-hour review. Absent Dr. Lawrence’s reconsideration, the VFW will exercise all avenues of redress to include proposing legislative remedies and pursuing litigation.”

Schmitz said rash decisions like this result in a lack of trust in the VA from veterans, service members and families. “The VA has had a difficult history of earning and maintaining the trust of its veterans, service members and families,” Schmitz said. “Making this change in the midst of a national pandemic is extremely troublesome and is just the latest example of distrust and lack of confidence in our VA to make our veterans its number one priority.” [Source: VFW Action Corps Weekly | March 27, 2020 ++]
• Disability Benefits Questionnaires, or DBQs, are standardized forms used by clinicians when performing C&P exams. The purpose of a DBQ is to ensure the clinician performing the exam captures and records all the information needed by VBA claims processors to make a decision.
• For many years, both Veterans Health Administration (VHA) clinicians and VBA contract vendors have conducted C&P examinations using DBQs. In FY19, VBA completed about 65 percent of the more than 1.6 million examination requests generated by regional office claims processors.

What are options for conducting C&P Examinations?
• The C&P exam process most familiar to most people is the in-person appointment where the Veteran physically reports to the medical provider’s office. For some disabilities, in-person examinations are required and cannot be completed through an alternate method.
• C&P examinations can also be completed using a process called Acceptable Clinical Evidence (ACE) examinations. ACE examinations can occur after a medical provider reviews the evidence of record and determines that the evidence is sufficient to complete a DBQ without an in-person examination. Sometimes, the examiner may need to call the Veteran and ask for clarification or ask the Veteran to answer some questions. Frequently, the ACE examination can be completed without telephone interaction with the Veteran.
• A third way of completing C&P examinations is through video or tele-C&P examinations. Tele-C&P examinations are suitable for the completion of some DBQ types, most commonly for mental health conditions. Tele-C&P examinations enable the Veteran to remain in his or her home and teleconference with the medical provider so the provider can see and speak to the Veteran.

Why has VA decided to suspend the in-person examination option?
During the COVID-19 pandemic, VA recognizes the value of social distancing and the need to reduce the amount of face-to-face contact. On April 2, 2020, the VHA temporarily discontinued performing C&P exams in order to prioritize resources for essential and critically needed health care services in this emergency. This directive also eliminate in-person examinations except in urgent care situations and reduces the number of people entering VHA facilities in order to protect employees and patients. VHA will conduct some C&P examinations through tele-exams and ACE where possible. Out of an abundance of caution for Veterans and medical providers, VBA is similarly suspending in-person C&P examinations until further notice and will continue to conduct C&P exams through ACE and Tele-C&P, when possible.

What you can do to assist with my claim?
Make sure your current private medical records are part of your VA claims file. The Department of Veterans Affairs encourages all Veterans to submit their private medical records for consideration during the processing of their benefits claim. VA values evidence from your private treatment providers because they are familiar with your medical history, often over a long period of time. VA appreciates the trusted and special relationship between private treatment providers and their Veteran/patients. Key methods that private medical records can be submitted are as follows:
• Veteran/Private treatment provider can send medical records directly to the Department of Veterans Affairs, Claims Intake Center, P.O. Box 4444, Janesville, WI., 53547-4444 or submit to VA regional office.
• VA will request your private medical records for you if you submit signed a VA Form 21-4142 and VA Form 21-4142a. You must complete and submit both of these documents.
• Private treatment records can be uploaded as part of an on-line submission of a claim at https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim.

Resources
VA encourages all Veterans to work with an accredited representative for assistance in completing claims for VA benefits. The accredited representative can help guide the Veteran in submitting applicable medical records for consideration on his or her claim. A list of accredited organizations can be found on the Office of General Counsel site at https://www.va.gov/ogc/apps/accreditation/index.asp.

Questions on Claims?
1. For individuals who need more assistance, VBA offers robust resources through the National Call Center (NCC) at 1-800-827-1000.
2. You can start and continue to file claims with no delay. To start or continue a claim
   • Fax a claim to VA’s Centralized Mail hub at (844) 531-7818
   • Submit completed applications by paper mail
3. Intent to file a claim is evidenced by:
   • Faxing or mailing a completed VA Form 21-0966 (https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-0966-ARE.pdf)
• Calling the NCC at 1-800-827-1000 or Veterans Service Center,
• Starting a claim online at https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim, or
• Asking a Veterans Service Organization (VSO) to complete one on a claimant’s behalf.

Note: Intent to file a claim will preserve a potential effective date and allow the Veteran up to one year to submit a completed claim form. Veterans can also work with a local VSO to submit claims electronically or by mail.

[Source: VBA | | April 6, 2020++]

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**VA Mental Health Care**

**Update 41: Virtual Use on the Rise Amid COVID-19**

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) continues, daily, to deliver quality and timely mental health care to Veterans, even as the COVID-19 pandemic has made traveling to VA facilities complex. VA staff data shows a dramatic jump in virtual mental health care services in March, a sign Veterans are successfully accessing care despite the challenges the pandemic has presented. VA Video Connect allows Veterans to consult with their healthcare provider via their computer, tablet or phone. Also, during March, mental health providers completed more than 34,000 appointments with Veterans using VA Video Connect, an increase of 70% from the 20,000 appointments made in February, before the pandemic. Here’s a breakdown of the increases.

- **Telehealth** group therapy conducted more than 2,700 visits in March, a jump of more than 200% from the prior month.
- Mental health care and **consultation** delivered by phone rose to more than 154,000 appointments in March, up 280% from the 40,000 appointments in February.
- **Vet Centers** across the nation held more than 47,000 virtual appointments in March, a 200% increase from February. These counseling sessions dealt with mental health issues.

Mental health care is especially important during stressful times such as these and VA invites Veterans to take advantage of the care they’ve earned. VA Secretary Robert Wilkie said the numbers show VA has made a quick adjustment to ensure ongoing support to Veterans during these difficult times. “VA is open for business and we continue to provide same-day mental health services and mental health screening for Veterans at-risk who require attention at any of our facilities,” said Wilkie. “There is no doubt VA’s early embrace of new technology is aiding Veterans and I applaud VA health care workers and Veteran patients for embracing it.”

Veterans interested in learning more about scheduling a telehealth appointment can read the latest VA information about the Coronavirus and mental health. Veterans looking to connect to local VA staff by phone can find their closest VA facility [here](#). For Veterans in crisis or those who are concerned, help is available at the Veterans Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255, and press 1, or text 838255, or chat [www.VeteransCrisisLine.net](http://www.VeteransCrisisLine.net). For more information about VA’s overall response to the COVID-19 pandemic and how procedures have changed at your local VA, [click here](#). [Source: VA News Release | April 13, 2020 ++]
Greetings,

The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) is providing information about the sunset of making Disability Benefits Questionnaires available to the public on our website. VBA will continue to accept any evidence that Veterans or their accredited representatives wish to submit in support of disability compensation or pension claims. This message is intended to advise you about the change and provide guidance and resources.

**What are Disability Benefits Questionnaires?**

- Disability Benefits Questionnaires, or DBQs, are standardized forms used by clinicians when performing disability examinations (also known as Compensation & Pension exams or C&P exams). The purpose of a DBQ is to ensure the clinician performing the exam captures and records all the information needed by VBA claims processors to make a decision on a Veteran’s claim. The VA Schedule for Rating Disabilities (VASRD) found in 38 Code of Federal Regulations Part 4 has very specific requirements for rating conditions claimed by Veterans, and if the required information is not properly recorded during the examination, it could delay the claim while VA goes back to gather the necessary information. DBQs help prevent this delay by standardizing and guiding what information is recorded for each condition.

- DBQs are used by both Veterans Health Administration (VHA) clinicians and VA contract vendor clinicians. There are more than 80 different types of DBQs that cover the 15 body systems contained in the VASRD. They were originally designed and released in 2010 to not only standardize the capture of information during VA exams but also as an alternative for Veterans to take to their treating physicians, particularly if they were living overseas or in rural areas where getting a VA exam was more difficult.
Why has VA removed DBQs from its public-facing website?

VA continues to use DBQs during C&P exams conducted by VHA and VA’s contracted vendor clinicians. There are several reasons why VA decided to discontinue making DBQs available for public use.

- **We have modernized.** VBA is currently more than half-way through the process of updating all body systems in the VASRD. This is the first complete update of the VASRD since the 1945 Schedule. As each body system is updated, so are the corresponding DBQs. For DBQs used internally by VA, the updated forms are available immediately. However, for DBQs available publicly, VA must engage in the formal process required any time a public-facing form is modified, which can take more than a year. This has resulted in outdated forms being available publicly, which can result in a Veteran submitting a DBQ from a private doctor and then being scheduled for a VA C&P exam to gather more information.

- **We have increased our capacity to conduct C&P exams.** To supplement VHA’s internal capacity to conduct C&P exams, VBA has contracted with three primary vendors to provide exams across the country. This has expanded the agency’s ability to conduct exams in more places than just traditional VA Medical Centers and Outpatient Clinics. The contracted clinicians can provide wider coverage, especially in rural areas and in conducting exams in federal and state prison facilities. Also, one of VBA’s contract vendors conducts C&P exams in 33 countries overseas, where VHA does not have a presence.

- **We are safeguarding against fraud.** In the past few years, we have seen a growing industry of individuals and companies marketing the service of completing DBQs for Veterans. Some have provided honest, valuable service to Veterans. However, VA has made hundreds of referrals to the VA Office of Inspector General of individuals and companies who are engaged in questionable, even fraudulent, practices that include charging high prices for completing DBQs or submitting DBQs with findings that are vastly different than the other evidence in the Veteran’s claims folder. Also, it is a requirement that DBQs submitted by a private provider must be based on an exam conducted in person. VA’s OIG recently issued an audit report about providers who were completing DBQs for Veterans remotely and recommended that VA revisit its practice of making public-facing DBQs available.

Will VA continue to accept evidence from my private physician?
• Yes. VA accepts any evidence that a Veteran or his/her accredited representative chooses to submit in support of a claim. Once all evidence is received, VBA claims processors review and weigh the evidence overall as part of the decision-making process.

• Veterans may submit private treatment records or request that VBA obtain those records on their behalf in support of their claims.

• Key methods that private medical records can be submitted are as follows:
  
  o Veteran/Private treatment provider can send medical records directly to the Department of Veterans Affairs Claims Intake Center P.O. Box 4444, Janesville, WI, 53547-4444
  or submit to VA regional office.
  
  o VA will request records with a VA Form 21-4142 and VA Form 21-4142a signed by the Veteran.
  
  o Private treatment records can be uploaded as part of an on-line submission of a claim at https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/

Resources

• We encourage all Veterans to work with an accredited organization for assistance in completing claims for VA benefits. The accredited representative can help in guiding the Veteran in submitting applicable medical records for consideration in his or her claim.

• A list of accredited organizations can be found on the Office of General Counsel site at this link: Search the VA Office of the General Counsel’s list.

Questions on Claims?

You can start and continue to file claims with no delay.

How to start or continue a claim:


2. Fax a claim to VA’s Centralized Mail hub at (844) 531-7818

3. Submit completed applications by paper mail
For individuals who need more assistance, VBA offers robust resources through the National Call Center (NCC) at 1-800-827-1000.

**Intent to file a claim:**

- Faxing or mailing a completed [VA Form 21-0966, Intent to File a Claim for Compensation and/or Pension, or Survivors Pension and/or DIC],
  - Calling the NCC or Veterans Service Center,
  - Starting a claim online, or
  - Asking a Veterans Service Organization (VSO) to complete one on a claimant’s behalf.

*Note: Intent to file a claim will preserve a potential effective date and allow the Veteran up to one year to submit a completed claim form. Veterans can also work with a local VSO to submit claims electronically or by mail.*

A grateful nation thanks you for your service.

Sincerely,

Veterans Benefits Administration

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Article submitted by Stan Patykiewicz
Quarantine reflections!

Half of us are going to come out of this quarantine as amazing cooks. The other half will come out with a drinking problem.

I used to spin that toilet paper like I was on Wheel of Fortune. Now I turn it like I’m cracking a safe.

I need to practice social-distancing from the refrigerator.

Still haven’t decided where to go for Easter or Passover ----- The Living Room or The Bedroom

PSA: every few days try your jeans on just to make sure they fit. Pajamas will have you believe all is well in the kingdom.

Home-schooling is going well. 2 students suspended for fighting and 1 teacher fired for drinking on the job.

I don’t think anyone expected that when we changed the clocks we’d go from Standard Time to the Twilight Zone

This morning I saw a neighbor talking to her cat. It was obvious she thought her cat understood her. I came into my house, told my dog..... we laughed a lot.

So, after this quarantine.....will the producers of My 600 Pound Life just find me or do I find them?

Quarantine Day 5: Went to this restaurant called THE KITCHEN. You have to gather all the ingredients and make your own meal. I have no clue how this place is still in business.

My body has absorbed so much soap and disinfectant lately that when I pee it cleans the toilet.
Day 5 of Homeschooling: One of these little monsters called in a bomb threat.

I'm so excited --- it's time to take out the garbage. What should I wear?

I hope the weather is good tomorrow for my trip to "Puerto Backyarda". I'm getting tired of "Los Livingroom".

Classified Ad: Single man with toilet paper seeks woman with hand sanitizer for good clean fun.

Day 6 of Homeschooling: My child just said "I hope I don't have the same teacher next year".... I'm offended.

Better 6 feet apart than 6 feet under....

HANG IN THERE, WE WILL MAKE IT TOGETHER!!
HONOR FLIGHT UPDATE

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic the April, May and June flights are cancelled. Currently we are still planning on 3 trips in the fall if the country is open. One in September and two in October.

Thank you
Steven Wendell
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Board Meetings</th>
<th>Membership Meetings</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 5, 2020 <strong>cancelled</strong></td>
<td>May 14, 2020 <strong>cancelled</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>June 2, 2022</td>
<td>June 11, 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 7, 2020</td>
<td>July 9, 2020</td>
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**Monthly Membership Meetings start at 6:30 pm**

*At the Italian American Sports Club, 1250 Buffalo Road, Rochester*

**Driving Directions to the Italian American Sports Club:**

The Club is located at 1250 Buffalo Road close to the intersection of Howard Road, directly across from the stone quarry, next to the Eagles Club and the Catholic Diocese of Rochester.

From the East: Heading west on 490, exit Mt. Read Blvd. and turn left; south on Mt. Read to Buffalo Road circle, turn right, west on Buffalo Road, 1.4 miles, the Italian-American Sports Club is on the right side.

From the West: Heading east on 490, exit 33 east, Buffalo Road (Gates Center); head east on Buffalo Road; continue past Howard Road; the Italian-American Sports Club will be on the left side in about .5 mile.
Your business card could be here. Contact Chapter Treasurer, Alan Frisa (afrisa@rochester.rr.com), for details.
In Memory Donations

When the simple act of placing flowers on a casket or placing stones on a headstone does not seem to be enough to honor the memory of a special someone who has passed away, one may choose to make a donation in his or her honor to commemorate the values and beliefs of the deceased. Chapter 20 VVA is committed to recognizing the sacrifices made by all military personnel in every branch of the armed forces. The memory of the deceased veteran is honored in the continuous work and service carried out by the dedicated Chapter members and associates. The monetary donations sent by individuals help make it possible to continue serving veterans and their families. The combined efforts of donors, lawmakers, members, and associates have far-reaching effects on the quality of all our lives.

Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 20 offers several ways of commemorating a special person. One of those ways is the Memorial Walk at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial at Highland Park. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Walk is a pathway of bricks inscribed with the names of individuals who have served their country with valor. Their names will forever remain a reminder of the dedication and tenacity demonstrated by the thousands of men and women who have served in the U. S. Armed Forces.

If you wish to make a monetary donation directly to Chapter 20 in support of all the functions and services they provide to veterans and their families, send your check or money order payable to Chapter 20, VVA:

Vietnam Veterans of America
Chapter 20
P.O. Box 12580
Rochester, NY 14612
VA Health Care Benefits Contacts and References

E-Benefits Portal Site
https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits-portal/ebenefits.portal

Enrollment/Eligibility
http://www.va.gov/healtheligibility
Health Resource Center 1-877-222-8387 (VETS)

OEF / OIF
http://www.oefoif.va.gov

Women Veterans
http://www.va.gov/womenvet
Benefits Line 1-855-829-6636

Dental Care

Copays
http://www1.va.gov/CBO/brochures.asp
Health Resource Center 1-877-222-8387

Suicide Prevention Hotline
1-800-273-8255 (TALK)

Prosthetics
http://www.prosthetics.va.gov

My HealtheVet
http://www.myhealth.va.gov

Homeless Veterans Hotline
1-877-424-3838
## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Phone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>Valentino Gatto</td>
<td><a href="mailto:valentinogatto1969@gmail.com">valentinogatto1969@gmail.com</a></td>
<td>585-482-7396</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Alan Frisa</td>
<td><a href="mailto:alanfrisa@gmail.com">alanfrisa@gmail.com</a></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## DIRECTORS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## STATE COUNCIL DELEGATES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Phone</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bill Auble</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## COMMITTEE CONTACTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Phone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between The Lines</td>
<td><a href="mailto:vietvet6478@gmail.com">vietvet6478@gmail.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Chaplain - Tom Puff</td>
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<td>716-227-3426</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>716-334-5352</td>
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<td>POW/MIA – Joe Peck</td>
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<td>716-594-2649</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Events – V. Gatto</td>
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<tr>
<td>Speaker’s Bureau – Ken Allocco</td>
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<td>716-392-9424</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vet Benefits – Stan Patykiewicz</td>
<td><a href="mailto:SNMPATYK@rochester.rr.com">SNMPATYK@rochester.rr.com</a></td>
<td>716-247-4830</td>
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<tr>
<td>Veterans Walk – C. Macaluso</td>
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<td>716-225-8288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Affairs – Rosemary Rossi-Williams</td>
<td><a href="mailto:pefrose@gmail.com">pefrose@gmail.com</a></td>
<td>716-738-6138</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## VETERANS ORGANIZATIONS AND INFORMATION

- Greater Rochester Vietnam Veterans Memorial – 753-7275 (enter 9; enter 2 to leave a message)
- VA Outpatient Clinic – 465 Westfall Rd 716-463-2600
- Veterans Outreach Center – 459 South Avenue 716-546-1081
- VA Vet Center – 232-5040
- Veterans Administration – 800-827-1000
- Monroe County Veterans Service Agency – 716-753-6040
- www.HonorFlightRochester.org

## WEB SITES / EMAIL ADDRESSES

- Vietnam Veterans Memorial at Highland Park
  www.rochestervietnammemorial.org/The_Memorial
- VVA New York State Council
  www.nyvietnervets.org
- Honor Flight
  www.HonorFlightRochester.org

## CONTACT INFORMATION

- **VVA Chapter 20**
  - 585-482-7396
  - P.O. Box 12580
  - Rochester, NY 14612
  - www.vva20.org

- **VVA REGION 2 DIRECTOR**
  - Ned Foote
  - nfoote@vva.org
  - 585-322-6722

- **NYS VVA PRESIDENT**
  - Nancy Rekowski
  - nrekowski@avva.org
  - 585-338-8147

- **AVVA REGION 2 DIRECTOR**
  - Cherie Steers
  - csvva@optonline.net
  - 516-822-5938

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