

Vietnam Veterans of America

Chapter 324 - PO Box 18631 - Milwaukee, WI 53218

In Service to America

Meeting Notice

18 March, '15

Elks Lodge

5555 W. Good Hope Rd.

Board Meeting 6 p.m.

Chapter Meeting 7 - 8 p.m.

Meetings are held on the third Wednesday each month. You are also invited to join members for conversation and discussion after the meeting.

Chapter web page: www.vietnamvetschapter324.com

National web page: www.vva.org

Future Meetings

2015

15 April, 20 May, 17 June, 15 July, 19 August,
16 September, 21 October, 18 November,
16 December

Chapter 324 Officers

President - Pat Ciofani 702-7734

Vice Pres. - Oliver Williams 358-4416

Secretary - Dennis Symanski 453-3600

Treasurer - Pat Moore 354-2533

Director - Ron Coppersmith 262-255-2832

Director - John Morgan 871-9274

Director - Joe Murray 262-389-7325

Director - Mike Ducette 262-968-5508

**Elections for the VVA 324 Board of Directors will be held
at the April meeting. Members are encouraged to participate.**

King News

Uniquely nestled along the Waupaca Chain of Lakes, the Wisconsin Veterans Home at King is the largest long-term care nursing facility in the state of Wisconsin (721 beds) and one of the largest in the nation. King offers rehabilitative services including short-term recuperative stays, long-term residency, respite stays and hospice/palliative care

- Open House will take place on May 17th from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Everyone is invited. Featured will be: the magnificent location, facilities, physical resources, and numerous activities to entertain all ages. Health care screenings will be available, as well as education on Advanced Care Directives, Guardianship, PTSD, palliative care services, and much more.

- King will become certified for Medicare A in March 2015. This will allow eligible veterans, spouses, widows and Gold Star parents, to use their Medicare A benefits at King.

Observations on Aging

- Middle age is when you have stopped growing at both ends, and have begun to grow in the middle.
- Middle age is when it takes longer to rest than to get tired.
- By the time a man is wise enough to watch his step, he's too old to go anywhere.
- At my age, "getting a little action" means I don't need to take a laxative.
- Don't worry about avoiding temptation. As you grow older, it will avoid you.
- You're getting old when "getting lucky" means you find your car in the parking lot.
- The aging process could be slowed down if it had to work its way through the Senate.

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA
Milwaukee Chapter 324
February 18, 2015

Meeting called to order at 7:00 pm by President Pat Ciofani

A Moment of Silence was observed for our brothers and sisters no longer with us and for all POW/MIA's and their families.

Pledge of Allegiance

Attendance – Oliver Williams, John Morgan, David Titter, Pat Moore, Paul Balge, Joe Herbert, John Zutz, Pat Ciofani,

Minutes of January 21, 2015 meeting reviewed and accepted.

Treasurer's Report – Pat Moore reported a balance of \$4909.80 in the checking account.

Communications – The chapter received a thank you for the donation to the Gary Wetzel event to be held at the War Memorial.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

VVA/AVVA Membership Update – Joe Herbert reported the chapter membership at 105.

Allied Veterans Meeting - No report

Volunteering at the VA - No report

Fund Raising - Nothing is scheduled prior to the fund raisers at Miller Park. It was decided to order more orange blossoms.

OLD BUSINESS

Elections will be held in April for Directors. We encourage members to attend.

VVA Region 6 meeting will be held in Janesville in May. Details to follow.

NEW BUSINESS

A discussion was held to revisit other sites for the monthly chapter meetings.

No decision at this time.

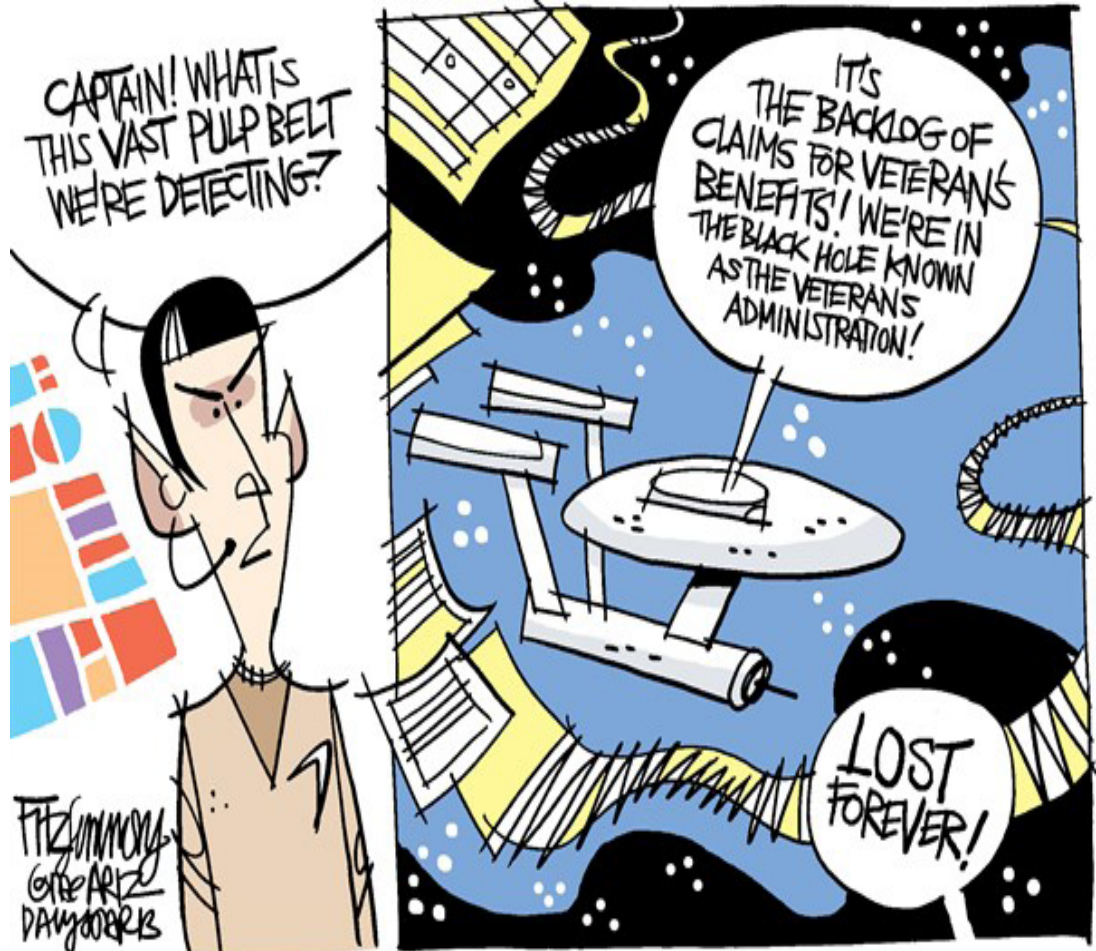
Memorial Day Parade

- Moved and passed to donate \$100.00 to the parade and to participate in the event.

FOR THE GOOD OF THE CHAPTER

It was reported that Joe Murray is doing better and encourage visitors.

Adjournment – 7:30 pm



VA Prescription Policy - Opioid Rule Adversely Impacts Vets

Washington Post | Emily Wax-Thibodeaux | Feb. 18, 2015

New federal rules that make it harder to get narcotic painkillers are taking an unexpected toll on thousands of veterans who depend on these prescription drugs to treat a wide variety of ailments, such as missing limbs and post-traumatic stress.

The restrictions, adopted last summer by the Drug Enforcement Administration to curb a national epidemic of opioid abuse, are for the first time, in effect, forcing veterans to return to the doctor every month to renew their medication, although many were already struggling to get appointments at overburdened VA health facilities. And even if patients can get appointments, the new rules pose an additional hardship for many who live a good distance from the health centers.

Although the tighter regulation applies to everyone on opioid painkillers, it's hitting veterans especially hard because so many are being treated for horrific injuries sustained during the long wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and have become dependent on the Department of Veterans Affairs' beleaguered health-care system for medical care.

The rules come at a time of turmoil for VA. The agency's widespread problem with patient backlogs burst into view last year with revelations that employees had covered up how long veterans had to wait for care, even for such pressing matters as cancer and suicide prevention. In dramatically curtailing access to the highly addictive painkillers, the government is trying to roll back what the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has termed "the worst drug addiction epidemic in the country's history, killing more people than heroin and crack cocaine."

The rules apply to "hydrocodone combination products," such as Vicodin. More than half a million veterans are now on prescription opioids, according to VA. Pain experts at VA say that in hindsight they have been overmedicating veterans, and doctors at the Pentagon and VA now say that the use of the painkillers contributes to family strife, homelessness and even suicide among veterans. A study by the American Public Health Association in 2011 also showed that the overdose rate among VA patients is nearly double the national average.

Officials at Disabled American Veterans, a veterans service organization, said VA needs to be more compassionate and help veterans through the changes. "We're hearing from veterans with lifelong

disabilities, who never had a problem with addiction issues. They have been on these drugs for decades, and then all of a sudden it was boom, a total change in attitudes," said Joy Ilem, the group's deputy national legislative director. Gavin West, a clinical operations chief at VA, said there has been a systematic effort since autumn to contact veterans to explain the new rules, broader concerns about opioid use and alternative options for treatment.

At the same time, he said, the agency is working to ensure that veterans get the access to medical care that's required. "The DEA did a good thing here for opioid safety," he said. But he added, "How do you balance the sensitivity of patients and the new rules when all of a sudden a veteran, who's been treated with this medication for 15 years or 20 years, has everything change?"

To help patients adjust to the changes, Rollin Gallagher, VA's national director for pain management, said staff members are meeting personally with veterans. "There is the real anxiety of being in pain and losing control of that pain. We are aware of the fact that we need to pay attention to this," he said. The agency recently set up a Choice Card program for veterans, which would allow those facing long wait lists or who live more than 40 miles away from a VA hospital to use private clinic visits.

Veterans say the initiative is complicated and confusing. VA officials acknowledged this month that veterans have been using this program at a lower rate than anticipated. DEA officials declined to comment on the specific challenges that the new rules pose for veterans. Barbara L. Carreno, a DEA spokeswoman, said in a statement that everyone, including "practitioners employed by the U.S. Veterans Administration," have to follow the new regulations.

The officials said the rules are a response to multiple medical studies that have showed that the opioid overdose rate is higher in the United States than anywhere else. DEA officials offer some flexibility, allowing doctors to write prescriptions for up to 90 days by postdating them. But many VA doctors will not do that because of concerns over fraud or fatal overdoses; doctors are telling patients they need to come back every month, medical staff say.

Half of all returning troops suffer chronic pain, according to a study in the June issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association.



We don't leave our wounded behind.

311 Homeless vets and their families moved into permanent homes and furnished completely by MHVI

600 Emergency food deliveries distributed to homeless and at-risk veterans and their families

1,500 Wisconsin veterans' lives improved by MHVI outreach, housing & referral services

2014 ANNUAL REPORT



Emergency care packages delivered to homeless and at-risk veterans & families

1,750

Bus tickets for vets' medical, housing & employment appointments at the VA

2,000

Collected in-kind furniture, household goods & food for at-risk vets

\$266,000



Veterans on a New Mission

Volunteers founded a wheelchair repair shop to assist anyone in need.

By Marion Kerr Snyder, Waupaca County Field Editor

A WISCONSIN veteran of the Korean War recently found himself in a predicament and didn't know where to turn. The resident of Iola lives alone, has one leg and no family nearby to help him get around. How do you carry the groceries home using crutches?

"Stories like this are too common," says Ken Tourville, one of the founders of Mobility 4 Veterans Wheelchair Shop in Waupaca. "He had limited income, so we gave him an electric scooter. He called me back and said, 'Ken, you've given me a whole new life. I can get to the grocery store again. I can go downtown for coffee.'"

"He started crying on the phone when telling me this, and to tell the truth, I choked up, too. He regained some independence and had a social life once more. It's stories like these that keep us going."

Founded in 2012, Mobility 4 Veterans Wheelchair Shop, Inc. is a unique nonprofit organization. Volunteers here collect used

***"I was glad to see them open—
what they do is so valuable..."***

health-care equipment donated by families who no longer need it. They repair the equipment and put it back into service to help others.

In less than a year, this central-Wisconsin group has helped people in Janesville, Madison, Eau Claire, La Crosse, Manitowoc and Upper Michigan.

You Name It, They Fix It

"Our motto is 'Veterans Serving Veterans', but we'll help anybody," says Ken. "We have electric wheelchairs, lifts for cars, oxygen tanks, walkers...you name it and we get it back into service."

"When we place equipment with someone, we ask for a donation, because we do need to keep the lights on here," he says. "But if they can't afford it, we'll give them the equipment anyway."

Mobility 4 Veterans was founded by six retirees who needed something to do. Along with Ken, Frank Shafer, Chuck Posnanski, Jack Knabenbauer, Alan Kjelland and Pete Petrick invested seed money to start the enterprise. It was recently certified as a 501c3 charitable organization.

Ten volunteers, ranging in age from 68 to 89, work there today. "You might call us the geriatric repairmen," Ken jokes. Two days a week they gather to rebuild equipment. "At 10 o'clock, we take a break to solve the world's problems over a little coffee and some paczki," he says.

The group works out of a small brown building near the Highways 10 and 54 interchange in Waupaca. Use of the 2,400-square-foot structure was donated, so all they have to do is cover utilities and upkeep. Monetary donations help them keep up with it.

Retirees Can Work Anytime

"We're open Mondays and Wednesdays to serve people who come for equipment. But we often come in other days to

catch up," Ken says. "Because we're retired, we have a flexible schedule—we'll open another day if it helps someone traveling to see us."

They travel as well, using their own pickups, vans and trailers to collect donated equipment. They also get some equipment from other veterans' organizations who deliver it to them.

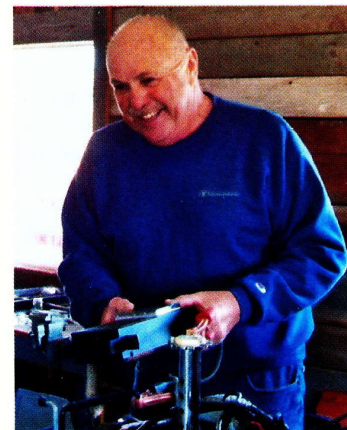
"I was glad to see these guys open their shop, because what they do is so valuable," says Bob Hanson, a volunteer with United Service Veterans of Manitowoc County. "I transport scooters, motorized wheelchairs and other equipment to them for repair."

"A controller alone on these specialized chairs can cost \$1,200," he points out. "They have many used parts and can often fix our equipment for free. I then pick it up and put it back into service."

These days, Mobility 4 Veterans gets 20 to 30 calls per week. At any given time, they have around six wheelchairs under repair. This keeps these retirees busy, and they're heartened to know their help is needed and appreciated.

"The other day I gave a \$26,000 motorized wheelchair to a family who needed it for a quadriplegic," relates Ken. "You cannot imagine the gratitude that comes from people when they're helped like this."

Mobility 4 Veterans is open Mondays and Wednesdays from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., or by appointment. People in need or those with equipment to donate can call 715/281-6175.



WHEELCHAIR REPAIR and more happens in this workshop. At left, Alan Kjelland checks for parts online. At right, Frank Shafer works on an electronic controller for a powered chair.





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Sign Up Now With Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 324

Anyone can join! Membership Options:

Vietnam Veterans (A copy of your DD214 must be included):

- Individual Member - 1 year \$20 • Individual Member 3 year \$50 • Life Member \$250
- Life Member Installment Plan (\$50 Deposit; \$25 per month for 8 Months)

Anyone Else:

- Associate Member - 1 year \$20 • Associate Member 3 year \$50 • Associate Life Member \$250
- Associate Life Member Installment Plan (\$50 Deposit; \$25 per month for 8 Months)

Please Print

Name _____ Membership # _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (_____) _____ E-mail _____

I would like to help Chapter 324 by donating \$ _____

Make checks payable to VVA324 and mail with this application to:

VVA Chapter 324 - Membership, PO Box 18631, Milwaukee, WI 53218