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AMERICA'S VETERANS

& AUXILIARY
MASSACHUSETTS
NEWSLETTER



Happy
HOLIDAYS



DECEMBER



*All functions DAV or Auxiliary of Massachusetts host, or attend as a vendor, are listed on www.davma.org/events

*when adequate information and proper notice is supplied to the Department





COMMANDER, BOB KINSMAN

It doesn't seem possible, but here we are in December, looking forward to the holidays and the new year.

We took time last month to thank our fellow veterans on their special day. Veterans Day is intended to thank and honor all those who served honorably in the military. Veterans Day is mainly intended to thank living Veterans for their service, and to highlight the fact that all

those who served – not only those who died-have sacrificed & done their duty. The DAV Department of Massachusetts certainly did its part this year to honor our military comrades. The DAV participated in a moving Veterans Day Ceremony at the Massachusetts National Veterans Cemetery in Bourne, MA. We also participated in the Boston Veterans Day Parade, a Veterans Day Ceremony at Faneuil Hall, and the DAV-MA Veterans Day Radiothon & 5K Run to honor veterans at Castle Island. Also, we were honored to attend a special Veterans Day Ceremony at a local high school organized by the school's AFROTC Detachment. This event allowed the entire high school (over 2,000 students) to become aware of the sacrifices of our military & veterans.

Our Legislative Committee members & supporters enjoyed a Guided Tour of the Massachusetts State House to further acquaint members with the Legislative Process. Our tour included visits to both the Senate Gallery and the House of Representatives. Senator John C. Velis, Chairperson, Joint Committee on Veterans & Federal Affairs, joined us for a discussion of veterans' issues and a brief Q&A session on current bills affecting veterans and their families. The tour concluded with a visit to the DAV-MA State House Office and finally a stop at the DAV National Service Office in the nearby JFK Federal Building.

The DAV Veterans Advancement Program helped to sponsor a Veterans Equine Therapy Retreat at Victory Farm in Fitzwilliam, NH. The event was enjoyed by all, and allowed visitors to see many potential uses for the recently acquired property, including a sober retreat, as well as areas for riding, camping, hiking, and cross-country skiing.

DAV members participated recently in the Plymouth Thanksgiving Parade. The focus of the parade this year was "A Salute to Our Veterans", and the theme was "The Price of Freedom" celebrating U.S. veterans and their sacrifice to build our nation. The parade has national television distribution. The Plymouth Thanksgiving Parade is ranked the #1 Thanksgiving Parade in the nation celebrating history, patriotism, and hometown pride! Other Thanksgiving activities included a DAV volunteer team helping Paul Wahlberg (of 'Wahlburgers' fame) to pack over 1,800 Thanksgiving meal boxes for the Boston Food Bank. Our Veteran Advancement Program donated over 100 Thanksgiving meals to residents and veteran families across the state.

DAV Officers assisted DAV Chapters 15 (Pittsfield), 25 (Lowell) & 92 (Northampton) in beginning reorganization efforts from a post-COVID malaise. Our Incarcerated Veterans Committee that assists veterans in prison with filing claims with the VA, is still looking for "a few good Service Officers" (certified CSO/DSOs) to assist us in this effort. Our DAV Transportation Program is ramping up in eastern MA, and is looking for more volunteer drivers (one need not be a DAV member to become a driver).

Kudos to several DAV & Auxiliary members who were appointed to various Governor's Veterans Committees, and were sworn in at the State House recently. Congratulations to DAV Malden Chapter 85 for celebrating its 75th year of service to veterans. Also, DAV Billerica Chapter 47 enjoyed a Comedy for Heroes fundraiser hosted by a local business.

Our Veterans Housing Program is tracking well and our Service Officers are extremely busy. The Legislative Team is gearing up for our Washington, D.C. visit. Make your reservations now. Our Membership Team is working diligently to win DAV Division I Honors (DAV-MA is still in 2nd place and we really need your assistance to recruit new members)!

Take time to enjoy the Holidays with family and friends! See you next year.

SR. VICE, BOB BRONSON



Before I start, the Department needs to know who is going to the Mid-Winter Convention. Please contact any of the Line Officers or Deb Olson. Thank you.

On the 9th of November, Governor Healey announced the Filing of the "Hero Act" at a news conference in Braintree. DAV Department of MA is in full support of this bill, and we will work to keep you posted on it's progress. Below is a breakdown of her announcement..

BOSTON — Governor Maura T. Healey today filed legislation to increase benefits, modernize services and promote inclusivity for Massachusetts veterans. [An Act Honoring, Empowering and Recognizing Our Servicemembers and Veterans \(HERO Act\)](#), will have positive impacts for hundreds of thousands of veterans living in Massachusetts, including nearly 30,000 women veterans and thousands of LGBTQ+ veterans. This historic legislation marks the first time in 20 years that a Massachusetts Governor has specifically introduced a comprehensive and expansive legislative package dedicated to the welfare of veterans.

"Our veterans have sacrificed so much for our country, and this transformative legislation marks an important step toward ensuring that Massachusetts supports them in return," said Governor Healey. "From day one, our administration has been committed to revitalizing veterans' services in Massachusetts and ensuring that every one of these heroes receives the benefits, resources and support that they deserve. I'm grateful to Secretary Santiago for his leadership of our state's first veterans' secretariat and look forward to collaboration with our legislative partners on this historic bill."

"By promoting inclusivity and expanding benefits, we're not only showing our gratitude to veterans but also addressing their evolving needs," said Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll. "This legislative package represents a significant step forward in the care and support we provide to our veterans, particularly for women and LGBTQ+ veterans."

The HERO Act encompasses 17 spending, policy initiatives, tax credits, and statute changes organized into three categories. You may also click or scan the QR code below to expand the full article.

Benefit Expansion

- Expands access to Behavioral Health Treatment.
- Increases the Disabled Veteran Annuity.
- Increases the Vet-Hire Tax Credit.
- Increases access to the Active-Duty Buyback program.
- Prevents the "COLA Cliff".
- Increases Local Flexibility for Veterans Property Tax Exemptions.
- Eliminates the Fee for Specialty License Plates for Veterans.

Modernization of Veterans Services

- Codifies Dental Assistance Benefits.
- Codifies Medical Assistance Benefits.
- Codifies Authority for Veterans Cemeteries.
- Modernizes statute language for inclusivity and standardization.
- Initiates a Study on the Use of Alternative Therapies for Veteran Mental Health Disorders.

Commitment to Inclusivity and Greater Representation

- Broadens the Chapter 115 Definition of Veteran.
- Expands the Scope of the Veterans Equality Review Board (VERB).
- Expands the definition of a veteran dependent.
- Updates Dependent Residency Requirements to Align with Current Practices.
- Implements IVF Reimbursement for Same-Sex Couples Denied Reimbursement by VA.



**CLICK HERE FOR
FULL ARTICLE**



IST JR VICE, ANDREA GAYLE-BENNETT

As the year draws to a close, December is a month filled with significance and celebration. It's a time when we come together to commemorate the diverse traditions and important moments that define the holiday season.

Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Diwali and the solemn remembrance of Pearl Harbor Day all hold a special place in our hearts. It's a time to reach out to those who may be alone, ensuring that no one feels forgotten during this special time of year.

Christmas: For our Christian members and friends, Christmas is a time to both rejoice in their faith and extend the spirit of Christ's message of love and service to others, particularly those who have served in the military and their families. Let's remember that the holiday season is an opportunity to reach out to our fellow veterans, ensuring they too experience the magic of the season.

Hanukkah: For our Jewish members and friends, Hanukkah is a time to commemorate the miracle of light. It's a festival of resilience and faith, symbolizing the victory of hope over despair. As you light the menorah, let it remind everyone of the strength and unity we find in our DAV community.

Kwanzaa: The seven principles of unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith, reminds us of the importance of these values not only during the holiday season but throughout the year. Let's reflect on these principles as we strive to make a positive impact on our veterans and their families.

Diwali: This Festival of Lights is a time to reflect on the light we can bring to the lives of others. In that spirit consider how we can serve our community, illuminate the path for our fellow veterans and increase our DAV family. Together, we can shine even brighter, providing support, camaraderie, and strength.

Pearl Harbor Day: On December 7th, we pay tribute to the memory of those who lost their lives during the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. Their sacrifice and the bravery of all who served during World War II are forever etched in history. We honor their memory and commit to ensuring their sacrifices are never forgotten.

As we celebrate these occasions, reach out to fellow veterans, especially those who may be feeling the weight of the past year. Extend a helping hand, offer a listening ear, and let them know they are not alone. Share the warmth of our community and invite them to join us. Together, we can make this season a time of unity, support, and shared purpose. Our organization is strengthened by the diversity of our members, and it is our collective duty to ensure every veteran's voice is heard.

I wish you all a joyous holiday season, filled with love, hope, and unity. Carry the spirit of these celebrations into the new year, knowing that together, we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of veterans and their families.

Thank you for your commitment to the Disabled American Veterans and dedication to our mission.



CONNECT with us on Facebook!



@DAVMASSACHUSETTS

2ND JR VICE DENNIS DEVINE



The holiday season is upon us already. Thanksgiving has come and gone just as fast as it took to eat dinner. I am very thankful and blessed for many things in my personal life and grateful for the opportunity to serve my veteran brothers and sisters.

Many years ago, at this time of year, I was a patient at Newport Naval Hospital. We had different veteran groups visit the wards to talk and keep us company. Many were WWII and Korean War veterans who took the time out of their lives to spend time with patients in the hospital. Now it is my time to pay that kindness forward.

Take the time to visit a veteran and to wish all veterans a wonderful holiday season. Christmas is the greatest giving time of the year. And "time" with a veteran is a gift worth giving. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all. May you be blessed with good health and safe travels.



3RD JR VICE EUGENE MCGREEVY

Hoping everyone had a nice time with family and friends this Thanksgiving. In four more weeks, we will be celebrating Christmas and while enjoying family friends' gifts and food let's not forget the significance and meaning of the day.

The Bylaws Committee in November and discussed Article 5 Department Executive Committee and Article 6 Finances. There are a few things to clarify in both articles that we bring to closure during our next meeting which will be held on December 5, 2023.

On December 5, 2023 we will be discussing Article 7 Auxiliaries Article 8 Chapter Organization and Article 9 Chapters,

The goal of the Committee is to complete the Bylaws by the end of February.

Any Chapter needing any assistance with their Bylaws can contact me at 413-530-4108 or emcgreevy@aol.com

Going the Extra Mile

DAV Department of MA Volunteer Driver Don Martel went the 'extra mile' for a veteran in need recently. After speaking with the veteran Robert Gagnon of Palmer, MA during a ride to his appointment, Don learned that the veteran felt he'd lost his independence since his bicycle became inoperable. He would often use his bike to go to the store, visit friends, exercise, or just to get some "wind-therapy".

Driver Scott Hiorns worked with Martel put together the Go-Fund me page to help raise the \$1,000 to purchase the bike. A total of 21 Donations were made. On November 17th Don Martel and Hospital Service Coordinator Phil Nadeau surprised the veteran and presented him a brand new electric bike!



Pictured (left to right) Phil Nadeau, Robert Gagnon, Don Martel



ADJUTANT MIKE VALILA

The WRKO Radiothon was a success, and our DAV5k Boston was record setting this year! Huge thanks to everyone who came out to participate, volunteer, donate, and assist with our DAV5k Boston! The weather was beautiful and it was a great day had by all in attendance. I would like to give a huge thank you to Mark Voner and Veterans Development Corporation, not only for being our current presenting sponsor, but also for announcing his pledge during the Radiothon and at the 5k to be the presenting sponsorship for DAV5k Boston 2024! Thank you Mark, and thank you to your team!

In short, 2023 has been a year of tremendous growth for our Department, and I look forward to all that 2024 has in store for us as we continue to grow. Our Department has revamped our website davma.org, grown our social media presence, started our own podcast, grown our relationships with a multitude of media partners, and so much more. This has expanded our outreach to levels never before seen for our Department.

Our Veteran Advancement Program continues to grow and explore expansion opportunities to better serve our veterans and families in need. The volunteer opportunities within the program are also ever-growing and has become a great source for Chapters to get involved. Please consider donating to their food pantry as it services veterans across the state who are in need, as well as residents within the programs. We are also moving towards in-house work therapy (CWT) programs to benefit our veterans. If you would like to get involved with the Veteran Advancement Program, please contact them at inquiry@davma.org.

This Holiday Season, please take time to enjoy your friends, families, and loved ones. So often we consume ourselves with helping others and forget to take a moment for ourselves. The holiday season can be a hard time for many, with hardships and intrusive memories, so please take the time to check in with your buddies. If you, or a veteran in your life is in crisis, please reach out to the Veterans Crisis Line by dialing 988, then press 1.

As you go about your holiday shopping or make travel plans, remember to check out and utilize your DAV Member Advantages. DAV Member rewards and savings cover thousands of retailers, stores, hotels, and more! For a full listing of DAV Member Advantages, please click on or scan the QR code below!



[DAV Member Advantages](#)



[Members Portal](#)



[Department Website](#)



STATE COMMANDER, DIANE SULLIVAN

It's hard to believe that December is here. I'm hoping that everyone had a great Thanksgiving, Mike and I did. I attended the Veteran's Day Memorial at Bourne Cemetery. I answered telephone calls at the DAV 5k Radiothon in Gardner and attended the 5k Road Race in South Boston. I marched in the Plymouth Thanksgiving Day parade and was happy that the rain held off. In all the years that I have been in parades, I have never seen so many spectators before. There were no gaps between groups of people and all of them were cheering and clapping, even the little ones. I'm looking forward to next year's parade and hope that more DAV and Auxiliary members will be able to attend. Sadly, to say that once again we will not be permitted to visit with patients on DAV Day at the Chelsea Soldiers Home. Mike and I will be delivering holiday cards and donated items of clothing and other items. I hope that each of you enjoy the upcoming holiday season and wishing you an early happy New Year. Here's to 2024!!!

As always, if you have questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me. If you would like to discuss anything with me, please call my cell phone at 781-325-6591.

STATE JUDGE ADVOCATE, FRAN COSTA

If you have questions regarding your Unit and you cannot find the answers, contact the State Commander. If the answer is not immediately available, the commander will get back to you as soon as possible with the answer. Do not contact National Headquarters on issues that should be resolved within the Department first. If you have a question regarding the Auxiliary Department, and it cannot be resolved from within, only then do you contact National Headquarters.

I am asking anyone with proposed amendments to our State Standing Rules to please get them to me in writing while it is fresh on your mind. Waiting until spring you may forget. Keep in mind it must be in writing with a rationale for the proposal.

"A leader MAGNIFIES the impact of the team (organization), not just the image of themselves" "You Cannot be in Leadership and be nasty to members and expect to be respected because of your TITLE" (author unknown). The office (title) is not about who we are. We must be members first even though we might be in a leadership role. Successful Units and Departments work as a team.

FINANCE COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN, PSC SANDY FINCEL

The Finance Committee will commence (if needed) at 9:30 AM ½ hour prior to the March 16, 2024 SEC Meeting in Malden, MA. Request for monies should be in writing 10 days in advance of the SEC Meeting either by email to gorsfincel@gmail.com or USPS mail to Sandy Fincel, 2 Smith St. Apt 1, Gloucester, MA. 01930. Thank you.

STATE TREASURER PSC JEAN SHIFFLETT

I would like to Thank all the Auxiliary Units that have sent in their 2023-2024 Mandates. I will be contacting any Auxiliary Unit that has not sent in them to date. This will give me an opportunity to say hello.

Anyone needing a check for reimbursement should contact me at 617-827-1911 immediately so I can request a warrant from the State Adjutant. Checks will not be issued without a warrant.

COMMUNITY SERVICE CHAIRPERSON, NANCY MOONEY

December in or culture is the season for many to be moved by the spirit of giving and caring for others. Let's make this our mission to include the veterans in our community.

Let us not forget the veterans who may not be in traditional settings such as those in shelters, homeless or in other Non VA facilities. These veterans gave their service as well as any of their fellow veterans did. Consider making a care kit(which could include a pair of warm socks, a gift card to DD, or a \$5.00 bill. A hat). Also consider during cold winter days keeping a few blankets or a coat in your car to give to veterans living on the streets. If you are uncomfortable driving into areas that you would encounter this population of veterans, check with a church in these areas they usually have a program that will provide aide to these veterans and your donation of blankets or care gift bags would be appreciated.

While doing your baking for family, set aside a few cookies or other treats that you enjoy in your family traditions to give to those veterans in your neighborhood who are alone. Consider visiting a veteran in a Non VA facility (hint many of these facilities have craft fairs during this season shop there) then pop in to say Happy Holiday to a resident veteran. The ideas are endless in ways to remember veterans in our community but most importantly just do it. It will make a big difference in the lives of our veterans lives and you will feel good for doing it.

In the spirit of joy, love and giving, in whatever way you choose to celebrate this season may you find kindness to our veterans as a major part of your reason to celebrate. Happy Holidays to you all. Thank you for celebrating the veterans in our communities.



ADJUTANT, JANET PRATT

Communication is key to our success as an Auxiliary. Your State Officers are here to serve you and members are free to contact them with questions. Please remember, however, that Units or members that have questions should follow the DAVA National Constitution and Bylaws and MA State Standing Rules regarding lines of communication prior to addressing questions to State or National Officers. It is important the chain of command of

Unit-State-National is followed.

Please if you know the date of your unit's installation, please send the request to the Adjutant by the end of February. The information needed is the date, place, and time. Who your unit is requesting to be the installing officer. Whether this is an open or closed installation and if you want a full suite or a smaller one.

The SEC is open to all DAVA members who would like to attend. Only the SEC or the alternate i(f the SEC delegate is not present) can make a motion and vote. All are welcome to attend.

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6:00PM

January 17 DAV Gardner
April 17 DAV Worcester
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Matt Scott

VICE PRESIDENT

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10 BUSINESS DAYS REQUIRED TO MAKE
APPOINTMENT FOR RIDES

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(413) 435-6870
HSC@davma.org
Mon-Fri 8-4pm



For more information on DAV services and programs, scan the QR code and visit us online at:
www.davma.org
All services are FREE to veterans and their families.

Happy and Healthy for the Holidays!

The holiday season can be both joy-filled and stressful. All of the cooking, shopping, decorating, travelling and visiting with family can leave you feeling alternately energized and exhausted. Taking care of yourself can be a challenge during this time. The Arthritis Foundation has a number of resources to help you stay happy and healthy over the holidays.



Watch, Listen and Learn

Recorded webinars and podcasts specific to military members and veterans are now available:

- **Getting the Best Possible Care webinar** – veterans and healthcare experts offer solutions to care challenges, including navigating access, treatment plans and pain relief options.
- **The Mental Health Pain Connection webinar** – Dr. Terry Keane, Director of the National Center for PTSD, and a panel of retired military members discuss ways to improve emotional well-being and pain.
- **Battling Back: Veterans & Arthritis podcast** – Learn why and how arthritis affects so many service members, what's being done about it and ways to manage arthritis, its symptoms and its impacts.

Treatment Options for Arthritis

- The online **Drug Guide** has a wealth of facts about drug classes and specific medications with filters to help you drill down to information that meets your specific needs. ([arthritis.org/treatments](https://www.arthritis.org/treatments))
- The **Supplement and Herb Guide for Arthritis Symptoms** provides thorough research of the most popular supplements and herbs used for arthritis to help you figure out what's right for you. ([arthritis.org/health-wellness](https://www.arthritis.org/health-wellness))



For more information or to get in touch with the local Massachusetts Office reach out to **Erica D'Agostino at (857) 327-5688 or by email edagostino@arthritis.org**
All of our resources for Military & Veterans Services can be found at www.arthritis.org/veteran