



Out Front

Michael G. Negrete, Chapter President

Its been a very busy and challenging past few weeks. Most importantly though, I want each of you to know, even though our office still physically remains closed because of the Governor's State of Emergency and Boston's non-essential business restrictions, we are still functioning in full force remotely. Mark, Kristen and myself are in daily contact with each other, as well as, local, state and federal officials and organizations ensuring the needs and interests of our members and Chapter are expressed, if not met.

A significant issue that arose of concern was the creation of "Critical Standards of Care" by each New England state which could have a huge discriminatory impact on the medical care our members could receive if having to use a community care hospital, or the VA, do to a reduction of medical resources during the COVID-19 pandemic. Read more about this in and several other pandemic related issues in my Chapter COVID Update on page 5. As these things unfold, please watch your inboxes for surveys and questionnaires, as we need your feedback to help emphasize and/or quantify the issues we're advocated for on your behalf.

Another impact on the Chapter this pandemic unfortunately has effected is our election process, and as such, the Board of Directors unanimously agreed to temporarily postpone it. As untimely as this is, its for the safety and health of everyone involved. For details of how/when the Board will proceed with the election, please read the letter on page 6.

One final thought during this pandemic, self-admittedly as we might all feel overly frustrated from being unnaturally locked down and isolated, we should be conscious not to be too short-sighted or critical of one-another. Regardless of the circumstances or past history, we don't know what other people might be experiencing in their lives at the moment and, in the end, we're all simply hoping to make it through these unsettling times safe and healthy on the other side.

Michael G. Negrete
President and Paralyzed Veteran

From the Director's Desk

Mark Murphy, Chapter Executive Director



I hope you are well during these incredibly challenging times. Since the temporary closing of our Chapter office on March 17th I have been working from home, where I am able to still execute the day to day operations of NEPVA such as responding to emails, receiving phone calls to the office which are forwarded to me, and participating in relevant conference calls and PVA related webinars. Jerry and Kristen are also working from home. Although our Chapter office is closed, I have traveled into West Roxbury 3 times now from my residence in Brighton to just check in on the office and receive any important mail. All seems to be in order in the office, albeit the parking lot and building are very quiet and completely empty!

Something we are continuing to look at and document is how this pandemic is affecting our members, both individually and collectively, here in New England. As you know so well, the spinal cord injury and disease (SCI/D) population is one of VA's most susceptible populations to COVID-19. Our members with SCI are not only in a high-risk group for the virus, but also for other health issues and the disruption of daily life, including the ability to access essential services and supplies. Many of these needs are immediate, and some may have a significant long-term impact. Over the past couple of weeks, I participated in a conference call and webinar with PVA National leadership and other Chapters/members. These kinds of communications have been enormously informative in learning about the impact of this pandemic on Chapters and members across the nation. In case you are interested, check out the website <https://pva.org/covid-19/> as it's a great resource outlining PVA's COVID-19 response.

While we were all disappointed to learn about the canceling of the National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Oregon, in addition to other important annual events and programs that many of our members very much look forward to every year, at NEPVA we remain deeply committed to continue providing the services our members depend on. Please stay safe, and if our staff can do anything to support you in any way please do not hesitate to reach out to me!

Mark Murphy
Executive Director