



Out Front

Michael G. Negrete, Chapter President

One last look at the fall foliage on the cover of this issue of the Cord Word. The leaves are steadily dropping and so is the temperature outside. With the cold weather also comes the flu season, which is now compounded with the addition of COVID-19. Its even more important this year to get your flu shot. As I wrote last month, there are a variety of ways to get your flu shot. In addition to the VA, there available at a number of community care pharmacies and immediate care providers. If seeking to get your flu shot in the community, please first check the VA's website (<https://www.va.gov/communitycare/flushot.asp>) to locate a nearby participating provider, as not all do participate in the program. One pharmacy we were made aware that's not participating this year is Walgreens.

As of this issue COVID-19 cases are on the rise again in New England. The CDC states one of the best practices to [prevent the spread of COVID-19 is to wear a face mask or covering](#). The Chapter is providing its membership with FREE Chapter branded face masks and neck gaiters. If you would like to receive a pair of each, turn to [page 22](#) for details on how to request these and help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Mark Murphy and I will be "virtually" attending this year's PVA Fall Board of Directors meeting. It will be held via Zoom, as was the Annual Convention, this October 19th thru 23rd. In addition to approving PVA's annual budget, there will be several important resolutions coming before the Board at this meeting. One resolution reduces/restructures PVA's eight mandated Chapter programs and another lengthens the terms for elected members of PVA's Executive Committee. Look to next month's issue of the Cord Word for a complete meeting report, including the resolutions that were adopted.

Speaking of Board meetings, if any Chapter member is interested in "virtually" attending the local Chapter monthly Board of Directors meeting, simply send an email to info@newenglandpva.org requesting a "BOD Meeting Invite". For complete details about the requesting an invite and meeting info turn to [page 22](#).

Wrapping up, I want to share with you the significance of October to me. October represents two significant life altering experiences in my life. The first, by choice, was stepping onto those infamous "yellow footprints" in San Diego and joining the eternal brotherhood of the Marine Corps. Although my family has a long and rich history of serving in the military that stretches back to World War I, I was the first in my family to earn the Eagle, Globe and Anchor. It is an honor and privilege for me, like all Marines, which can never be taken away and will carry until their dying days. Marines use the words camaraderie and brotherhood to describe their relationships. It is something we deeply share regardless of age, race, sex or religion. Although I've also served in the Coast Guard, a graduate of the Air Force NCO Academy, and spent a year at Naval Electronic Warfare school, there exists an Esprit de corps within the Marines I've not found in any of the other branches. It is this sense of Esprit de corps that connects the generations of Marines, past and present. It is this and the foundation of lessons learned in the Marines that shaped parts of my life at an early age, and which still guides me today.

The second event, by accident, was joining another distinct group - those who had sustaining catastrophic spinal cord injuries. Suffering a C4-C6 SCI definitely was a life changing experience for both me, and those closest to me. As most of you know, living with a SCI presents its challenges, but its how we confront and overcome these challenges that determines our paths forward. Just as in the Marines, those of us living with SCIs share a very real common experience that no others can fully understand or appreciate without joining themselves. Its also these shared experiences that uniquely bond us to one another.

Unbeknownst to me years later, these two life changing events combined would prepare me in my journey to and for my current role - serving fellow Veterans with spinal cord injuries and disease. Being able to tangibly enrich and impact the lives of those who have giving a part of their lives in service to our country is simply immeasurable. More importantly, beyond my service to our fellow veterans, is yours. Each Chapter member reading this has experienced both military service and a SCI/D, which has uniquely equipped you with experiences which can be applied in serving, in helping, other Veterans facing the same challenges. It doesn't matter whether the action you take is big or small, just that you take some action.

To quote again, World War II Navy Veteran Leo Buscaglia - "Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around." In these poignant times we are each navigating, consider Leo's thought as you make way through this journey called life and the impact you have on others.

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and Paralyzed Veteran