



# Out Front

Michael G. Negrete, Chapter President

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As we all start preparing to enjoy the coming warm weather of spring and summer, take a moment to reflect on the pandemic year gone past. In the year gone past, the pandemic has effected every part of our lives, economy and government, the most poignant of which is the unimaginable loss of over [500,000 lives to COVID-19 across our country](#). As a Chapter, we have lost members to this virus. I would ask as you read this, to take a moment of pause to remember our fellow members and all the lives lost this past year. I have not met someone yet, who doesn't have a connection to someone who's perished from this virus.

I would encourage every Chapter member to get vaccinated. [Page 2](#) lists several VA facilities in MA, NH, CT, RI and VT where you can receive a vaccination regardless of age. Surprisingly, the VA is well ahead of their community care counterparts. They were able to work down the age related [CDC guidelines](#) in record time. Early on, in VISN1, they recognized the need to re-prioritize SCI Veterans as high-risk and moved them from 1c to 1b status. Although there were some communication issues in the execution of getting these Veterans notified, [VA Boston Healthcare Director Vincent Ng](#) was very open to listening to our concerns and acting on them. As it stands now in VISN1, every member, every Veteran, is eligible

to receive a COVID-19 vaccination regardless of their age. Again, I would encourage you to contact the closest VA facility to schedule a vaccination appointment. I'd also recommend frequently checking the [CDC website](#) for current and updated COVID-19 recommendations and guidelines to follow.

During the first week of March I had the privilege of representing our Chapter members before several New England Congressional offices. That being said, they were uniquely different from years past, as these meetings were all conducted virtually. See [page 6](#) for a snapshot of one of the "Zoom" meetings with Congressional staff. There's some real traction on some of our [Legislative Priorities](#) this Congressional session, the AUTO act and ART being two of them. And please give [Kristen](#), our "new" [Government Relations Director](#), a round of applause for her large role in the Chapter receiving the **2021 PVA Richard Fuller Outstanding Achievement in Government Relations Award!** You can [read the details](#) of our [Government Relations program's](#) efforts this past year to earn this prestigious PVA award on [page 7](#). If you are interested in joining the efforts of our GR program, Kristen would be glad to hear from you. You can reach her via email at [kristen@newenglandpva.org](mailto:kristen@newenglandpva.org) or 800-660-1181 #3.

The Chapter also received two other PVA awards this month, the **2021 PVA Bob Webb Excellence in a Newsletter Award** and the **2021 PVA John M. Price Most Improved Chapter Award**. It took a lot of dedication, hard work and leadership to get the Chapter from where it was a few short years ago to where it successfully today. If you're interested in reading the Chapter award submissions detailing the work leading up to receiving these awards, please feel free to email me at [michael@newenglandpva.org](mailto:michael@newenglandpva.org). Pending any pandemic restrictions, these awards will be presented at PVA's 75th Annual Convention this coming May.

Part of our success has been our ability to adapt and pivot when needed to continue meeting the needs of the Chapter and its membership. To this point, I started a monthly series of benefits and program webinars. The first was on Veterans Adaptive Vehicle Benefits, which overwhelming receive by all who attended. There were a wide array of attendees from all across the country, and even Puerto Rico. Our next webinar this coming Tuesday, March the 23rd will be on [PVA's Veteran Career Program](#) lead by Program Director Lauren Lobrano. You can preregister [HERE](#) to attend. The following April webinar will be on [VA Prosthetics and Sensory Aids with VISN1 Service Line Manager Josh Dixon](#). If there's a subject you'd like covered, please email me at [michael@newenglandpva.org](mailto:michael@newenglandpva.org). I'd be more than glad to hear your ideas and see what can be arranged to the benefit of all our members.

Finally, I received a very positive response to my February *Out Front* commentary [The Problematic Thinking of "Ain't Broke, Don't Fix it."](#) It really is this mindset that has helped to move our Chapter forward from its recent past and is still needed to propel it into the future. I'm always open to new ideas to help meet the needs of our Chapter and its members, so please feel free to contact me directly if you have ideas you'd like to share. I can always be reached directly via email at [michael@newenglandpva.org](mailto:michael@newenglandpva.org) or at 857-229-8825.

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