



## Out Front

**Michael G. Negrete, Chapter President**

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This May I'll be traveling to Las Vegas with our Executive Director Mark Murphy to represent the Chapter at PVA's 75th Anniversary Convention. We have been recognized for numerous accomplishments over the past few years which makes this Convention's attendance even more special.

Also of significance at this Convention is PVA's milestone event donation of \$1.5 million dollars to Yale University's Center for Neuroscience and Regeneration Research and the University of Pittsburgh's Human Engineering Research Laboratories. The New England Chapter will be participating in a matching campaign with the other Chapters to raise \$750,000 by donating \$23,000 to contribute to these programs. This donation represents the New England Chapter's steadfast commitment to these unique programs and the critical impact each has provided to those living with spinal cord injuries or dysfunction.

PVA and the Chapter's new logo will also be unveiled at this year's Convention. Regarding this for Chapter member's, please keep an eye on your postal mail for a special gift from the Chapter Board. Please keep an eye on the Chapter website for Convention photos and activity reports.

Having mentioned traveling a cross the country, I would be remiss not to recognize the turmoil, anguish and hopelessness we continue to see around our country every day. The root of this made me think of a quote I recently came across from Major League baseball player Leon Brown. It goes hand-in-hand with and expands on my favorite Theodore Roosevelt quote – *“Do what you can, with what you have, where you are.”*

Leon Brown said, *“Never underestimate the valuable and important difference you make in every life you touch for the impact you make today has a powerful rippling effect on every tomorrow.”*

These are very powerful words coming from a young black man in the late 60's. Words that continue to carry meaning and purpose for us today. With this, I want to share a story some of you may, or may not, have heard, but does have a very poignant message to it.

Once upon a time, while walking along a beach, an elderly wise man saw someone in the distance leaning down, picking something up and throwing it into the ocean. As he got closer, he noticed that the figure was that of a young boy, picking up starfish one by one and tossing each one gently back into the water.

Elderly wise man came closer still and called out, “Good morning! May I ask what it is that you are doing?” The young boy paused, looked up and replied, “Throwing starfish back into the ocean.” The elderly wise man smiled and said, “I must ask then, why are you throwing starfish back into the ocean?” To this, the young boy replied, “The sun is up and the tide is going out. If I don't throw them in, they will die.”

Upon hearing this reply, the elderly wise man commented, “But young man, do you not realize there are miles and miles of beach and there are starfish all along every mile? You can't possibly make a difference!” The young boy listened politely. Then he bent down, picked up another starfish, threw it back into the ocean past the breaking waves and said, “It made a difference for that one.”

The young boy might not have been able to help every starfish along that beach or across the oceans, but he was able to help those right then and right where he was. We often think what we do might be insignificant or too unimportant to make a difference, but this couldn't be further from the truth.

To the young boy, throwing the starfish back into the ocean was just a small and simple act, but to the starfish it was literally life changing. Just like the young boy in the story, we can start by making a positive difference in the lives of those right around us. And like the ripple made in the life cycle of the starfish, so will you make a ripple forward in the lives of those you have made a difference in.

I encourage each of you to take the time to do something that will make a difference in someone else's life. It doesn't have to be much or expensive. Just a small simple act like a phone call to say “Hi”, paying for someone's coffee in line, or just spending a little extra time with someone. Just take a moment do something. The choice to make a difference is entirely up to you.

Michael G. Negrete  
Chapter President/PVA National Director  
and Paralyzed Veteran