

## Fact Five:

**Keystone PVA gets no tax dollars. None.** Our chapter's small budget depends on some support from the national PVA, proceeds from the sale of goods by the American Thrift Center, and private donations.

Because Keystone PVA is a charity organized under Section 501(c)(3) of the IRS Code, and because we are approved by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as a charitable, non-profit organization, your donation is tax deductible on your federal tax return if you itemize.

The tax-exempt status of Keystone PVA is only partial. The only exemptions specifically made are sales & use taxes (though not all) and property tax on our small office building in Sharpsburg, Pa., near Pittsburgh. We pay plenty of others, and employees pay every tax on their income that private-sector employees do.

Donations made out to "Keystone Paralyzed Veterans of America" or "Keystone PVA" and



Paralyzed vets help organize their own activities, such as the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, which were held in and around Pittsburgh in 2011. In this photo, archers stretched to the vanishing point at the athletic fields of Shady Side Academy in Fox Chapel, in suburban Pittsburgh.



Paralyzed vets work with their care providers to insure that facilities meet the required specifications. Here, Jerry "Bull" Baylor (*former Marine, center*), PVA National Service Officer Dave Parkinson (*former Marine, back to camera, measuring the room*) and SCI Physician Hema Murthy, M.D., check the size and equipment of an SCI exam room at a VA medical center near Pittsburgh.

mailed to our Pennsylvania office will make the greatest direct impact on our paralyzed vets.

### **We deeply respect your trust and generosity.**

As a nonprofit charitable organization, Keystone PVA is subject to oversight by the IRS, the Pa. Bureau of Charitable Organizations, and our own national PVA. We report to all of them at least annually. Our records are open to the public. For information on almost any charity, we recommend GuideStar.org. We'd be pleased if you would look us up!

### **Medals showered on our wheelchair athletes**

Keystone PVA's wheelchair athletes brought home an astounding 70 medals from the 2013 National Veterans Wheelchair Games held in July in Tampa, Florida. In August 2014, they will compete at the Games in Philadelphia, Pa. More information, and how you can help, is at [www.kpva.org](http://www.kpva.org). Scroll down the home page.

## Who is a paralyzed veteran?

A former U. S. military man or woman who has sustained a spinal cord injury (SCI) or spinal cord disease (SCD, such as multiple sclerosis) is a paralyzed veteran. With a copy of his/her Department of Defense Form DD 214 and a physician's letter certifying his/her medical condition, a veteran can join the Keystone chapter of the PVA at no charge.

## Would you like to hear from our vets?

They would love an opportunity to speak to your company, club, institution or other organization. A call or an e-mail to our office is all it takes.

## How can you help?

### *Join as an associate member:*

It's just \$25 a year for non-paralyzed/non-vets. Get the bi-monthly newsletter and invitations to the Annual Awards Banquet and Kennywood Park Day, among others. Ask us for an application form.

### *Support paralyzed vets in these ways:*

#### **Direct financial support**

We accept donations in any amount. Checks should be made out to "Keystone PVA." Donations are deductible from federal income tax for those who itemize.

#### **Event and athlete sponsorship**

All of our major events are open for sponsorship, and we accept sponsorships to send our wheelchair athletes to the National Veterans Wheelchair Games.

#### **Donate household goods**

American Thrift Center based in West Mifflin, Pa., will accept clothing and shoes in any of over 170 red donation boxes in the Pittsburgh region — see the list of locations on our web site. American Thrift will also pick up larger household items from your home in the Pittsburgh region — call 412-469-9663 for pickup. Keystone PVA is the sole beneficiary of American Thrift's operations.

**Donate your car, boat, or any vehicle** no matter where you live. Call 866-244-8464 to make arrangements. Proceeds from the sales benefit Keystone PVA.

# FIVE FACTS

you ought to know about



## Paralyzed Veterans of America

and the

### Keystone Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America

1113 Main Street, Pittsburgh PA 15215-2407

Phones 800-775-9323 or 412-781-2474

E-mail: [keystonepva@comcast.net](mailto:keystonepva@comcast.net)

Web site: [www.kpva.org](http://www.kpva.org)

Serving Pennsylvania's paralyzed veterans

## Fact One:

### Paralyzed veterans help themselves through the Paralyzed Veterans of America.

Right after World War II, groups of military veterans injured in that conflict gathered in several places in the United States to encourage and provide expertise to the Veterans' Administration (now the Department of Veterans Affairs, still known as the "VA") These groups evolved over the years into the Paralyzed Veterans of America, whose headquarters is in Washington, D.C., and which has 34 chapters, including Keystone, across the nation.

**Our mission** is to improve the quality of life of paralyzed veterans by

- Encouraging and supporting spinal cord injury and disease research;
- Improving access to health care and other veterans' benefits;
- Assisting in the expansion of opportunities in wheelchair sports and recreation; and
- Advocating for the rights of disabled people, including the reduction and elimination of barriers to accessibility and mobility.

## Fact Two:

### Paralyzed Veterans of America and its chapters, such as Keystone, are NOT part of the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

We couldn't do our jobs if we were. A major part of our health care advocacy involves keeping tabs on how our fellow paralyzed veterans are being treated in veterans' hospitals and other treatment facilities. We report, without undue influence from VA officials, about the care our members get—or sometimes don't get.

## Fact Three:

### Paralyzed Veterans of America, its chapters and its partners provide strong guidance to Congress and the VA in writing the VA budget.

In partnership with AMVETS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), and the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), PVA and its chapters annually write The Independent Budget (The IB), which Congress and the VA use as their guide for writing the budget for the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), which is the largest part of the VA budget. Together, we have the expertise to effectively guide the VA and assist the Congress in appropriating the right funding for veterans' care.

How did The Independent Budget gain such credibility? Only a few years ago, the VA insisted on writing its own budget with little help from us. Then the \$3 billion shortfall hit the front pages of the news and the attention of Congress. Members of Congress held up The IB on the floors of the House and Senate and reminded everyone that we, the veterans,



These paralyzed vets — Chris Fidler (former Army), Bill Jakovac (retired Navy), and Jim Riemer (former Navy) — took a break after visiting their members of Congress to discuss the VA budget and how it is spent.

knew what the budget ought to be. Now, we all work together even more diligently to get the VHA budget right.

Though PVA is the smallest of the veterans' service organizations that write The IB, over half of the authors are PVA members or staff. That's because the nature of spinal cord injuries and disease involve a broad range of medical issues and make the Paralyzed Veterans of America well-suited to advise the VA on health care.

**Keystone PVA contributes to The IB** through its monitoring the health care of our fellow veterans and reporting comprehensively every month to the PVA national organization. Then we personally visit our members of Congress to let them know how the taxpayers' dollars are being spent by the VA.

## Fact Four:

### PVA punches way above its weight class.

For a small veterans' service organization (VSO), we pack a powerful punch. Consider our dominant role in writing the Independent Budget (Fact Three). That budget doesn't just address the health care needs of paralyzed vets; it is a budget for ALL veterans who use the VA's medical centers and other community health services.

And our advocacy to advance accessibility, mobility, and compliance with the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) helps the millions of Americans to live their lives more in the mainstream than ever before.

Though there are thousands of organizations in the U.S. that try to help vets, **only 38 VSOs**



Paralyzed vets look forward to the annual Bass Tournament on the Monongahela River. Keystone PVA Membership Officer Tom Strang (*former Navy, left*) is an organizer of the event. With him is his volunteer boat captain, Joe Balaban.

**can legally represent veterans to the VA in order to get the benefits to which the vets are entitled, and PVA is one of them.** PVA has a "national service officer" in most major metropolitan areas, including Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. Our NSOs are highly trained, experienced, and successful in obtaining veterans' benefits, often benefits they were initially denied.

Keystone PVA is the tip of the Paralyzed Veterans' powerful spear for the veterans we serve in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

***Please turn the page for Fact Five***