



Newsletter Editor:

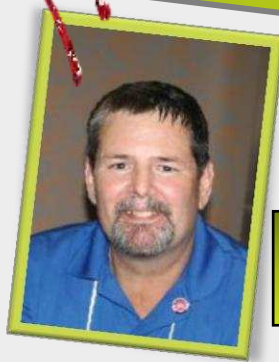
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**FULFILLING OUR PROMISES  
TO THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVED**

## DEPARTMENT COMMANDER

David W. Riley

Comrades,

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Welcome to 2014! I hope each of you and your families had a very Merry Christmas. It's hard for me to believe that I am already half way through my year as your commander. It has been a very busy time for me and the Department staff. Recently I had the honor of representing the DAV in this organizations participation in Hollywood's Christmas parade. It was the highlight of my current year. Everything from walking the red carpet to hanging out with the stars in the green room was done first class. As one DAV leader said, "It was the DAV show from start to finish." I believe that the DAV will get rewards for its participation for quite a while.

Coming out of the holidays, I am sure most of you are ready for some rest and relaxation. Unfortunately there is no rest for the weary. This time of year puts us right into our Mid-Winter Training Conference and preparations for National Mid-Winter in Washington, DC. The Mid-Winter Conference is a great time for all of us to get together and discuss what the Department Leadership wants to accomplish in the first 6 months of 2014. I hope you will make a very special effort to join us in Montgomery.

There are. Quite a few action items on our legislative agenda that you may want to familiarize yourself with as attacks on our benefits have reared their ugly heads again. Please use the commander's action

network to start some interaction with your legislators as we all need to do our part.

Our National Services Officers (NSO) will start Thursday morning (January 9) with the Chapter Service Officer (CSO) training. This training will end around noon on Friday. I have reviewed the list of trainees and we are looking at another large list of trainees. Because the training materials have already been ordered, if your name is not on the CSO list then you will not get training materials or a certificate. However, you may still sit in the class and receive the training. The NSOs want to train as many CSOs as possible each year. But if your chapter has not placed your name as a CSO on the officer report, and sent that report to the NSO Supervisor, then there is no way of knowing who will attend the training or how much training materials are required for the class.

I am looking forward to our District Junior Vice commanders reports. We will also need to work together to name all the individuals for our committees. If you are interested in setting on a committee, contact your district commander.

This is the time of year where many of us reflect on the past. It is also a time of year when suicides are more prevalent. There are few things in life that are as bad as they seem at first. Dealing with adversity begins with analyzing and accepting your situation for what it is. When you realize that things are not nearly as bad as they might have been, you have taken the first step





toward working your way through the problem. It is a truism that you will never be asked to carry a heavier load than you can bear, but it sometimes helps you better appreciate that fact if you volunteer some of your time to help those who are less fortunate than you are. The DAV gives us plenty of opportunity to assist our fellow veterans and their families.

A little trivia;

The first known Christmas card was sent in 1843 by Sir Henry Cole. He commissioned a local artist to create a decorative card that would allow him to save time by mailing holiday greetings to all of his associates. Original Christmas card inscriptions typically read "Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you." In 1875, Louis Prang became the first printer in America to offer Christmas cards. After the dawn of the 20th century, Christmas cards flourished. On June 26, 1870, legislation was passed to declare Christmas a federal holiday.

Please remember that while we enjoy Christmas with family and friends, our dedicated troops will be risking life and limb serving their country abroad. They may be far away, but they need to be reminded that they are constantly in the thoughts of their loved ones back at home.

As most of us has experienced, for soldiers in the field, Christmas will be just another day in the long line of days spent away from their families. Letters, V-mail, care packages, and cards often help boost the morale of military personnel while serving far from home.

Our membership numbers continue to be a tremendous challenge. Our current goal is out of reach unless **"each"** of us gets into the act of recruiting. I am asking each of you to please reach out with a sense of purpose in 2014, and personally get 1 new member in your chapter. After signing them up get your new member

involved in the DAV.

As soon as we complete our Mid-Winter, the Department's Legislative team, will be in full swing preparing our trip to the National Mid-Winter Conference which will be held in Washington, D.C. Legislative lobbying is one of the most important functions of our organization. There are. Quite a few action items on our legislative agenda that you may want to familiarize yourself with as attacks on our benefits have reared their ugly heads again. Please use the commander's action network to start some interaction with your legislators as we all need to do our part. Our efforts to maintain and gain benefits for our disabled veterans and their families are the purpose of National Mid-Winter as each department actually assaults Capitol Hill and visits with our elected representatives.

I am very proud of the great work that has been done by the Department in the past six month. Please remember that the Department has an active gulf coast veteran's sport program. This program should be a great way to engage our younger veterans. If you run across a disabled vet that could benefit from a fishing or hunting trip in a safe supervised environment, please email me their info and I'll get them signed up for upcoming events.

I want to thank each one of you that are active within the Department, Districts and Chapters for the work that you have done. It is an honor to be among the ranks of those who are willing to give so much of them.

Have a safe trip and I look forward to seeing most of you in Montgomery!

Respectfully,

*Dave Riley*

### Disabled American Veterans Mission Statement

We are dedicated to a single purpose: empowering veterans to lead high-quality lives with respect and dignity. We accomplish this by ensuring that veterans and their families can access the full range of benefits available to them; fighting for the interests of America's injured heroes on Capitol Hill; and educating the public about the great sacrifices and needs of veterans transitioning back to civilian life.

- Providing free, professional assistance to veterans and their families in obtaining benefits and services earned through military service and provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and other agencies of government;
- Providing outreach concerning its program services to the American people generally, and to disabled veterans and their families specifically;
- Representing the interests of disabled veterans, their families, their widowed spouses and their orphans before Congress, the White House and the Judicial Branch, as well as state and local government;
- Extending DAV's mission of hope into the communities where these veterans and their families live through a network of state-level Departments and local Chapters; and
- Providing a structure through which disabled veterans can express their compassion for their fellow veterans through a variety of volunteer programs.



**DEPARTMENT SENIOR VICE COMMANDER**

Laird Culver



Comrades,

Happy New Year,

I hope everyone had a decent Christmas and that you are now looking forward to a great 2014. Each of us had adjustments to make in 2013 and in this New Year our department will most likely be making adjustments as well. What is life without change?

Since the convention I have visited many chapters in our great department and state of Alabama. Since June, I have been to the Commander and Adjutants at DAV National Headquarters in July, DAV National Convention in Orlando in August, and the National Veterans Day Parade in Birmingham and Louisiana Mid-Winter Conference in Alexandria in November. I have represented the department in meetings and at events where I had the opportunity to engage the audience and speak to them about our great organization.

Since July, Junior Vice Commander, 4<sup>th</sup> District, Fay Miller and I have been dealing with a touchy issue at one of her chapters. It has come to light through a lengthy investigation had mentorship been conducted, accountability been maintained, vouchers been used, the Chapter Officers Guided been understood, Robert's Rules of Order adhered to and the National, Department and Chapter Constitution and By-laws followed, the particular issue could have been avoided. While the chapter having this problem has begun turning around, it is not the only chapter in the department having this same issue. Each and every chapter can always afford to tighten up and start doing things in accordance with the rules and procedures of DAV National, Department and Chapter.

In September, with heavy heart, I attended PDC Charles B. Fisher, Jr's funeral service. Our department was well represented with words spoken by PDC James Graves and department and chapter officers conducting pall bearer duties. The graveside service was well attended and while it was a somber event, it was also a celebration of a patriot.

DAVA Unit 78 invited me to come to the Willie A. Pruitt Black and White Banquet which was well attended

and put on as usual. Junior Vice Commander, 2<sup>nd</sup> District, Carol Varner presented roses and did a good job of navigating with an injured leg and using a self-propelled scooter. CPT (RET) Pat Hill from Chapter 9 in Enterprise was guest speaker and his tribute to veterans and those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice was fitting. Everyone was once again entertained by WWII veteran and former POW Shorty Goodwin who told of his incredible escape from the enemy to the Russian front with his buddy. I would challenge those who have not been to the banquet, held annually in Shocco Springs, to attend next year's banquet. It is a blessing in and of itself to see so many in the community in support of veterans.

I drove to Demopolis to visit one of our chapters in the midst of a potential crisis. Their challenge has become dwindling membership and what to do about it. Junior Vice Commander, 3<sup>rd</sup> District, Charles Waugh, in attendance, suggested having contact teams within the districts that would help with membership drives and possibly assist in Chapter Service Officer duties. Both are fantastic suggestions and I would ask those chapter commanders and members reading this who would be willing to do such a thing to contact me directly so we can get a feel for how the department as a whole feels about these ideas.

In October, Birmingham's Chapter 4 invited me to attend their Genesis Veterans Appreciation Dinner and I had a great time fellowshiping with the members of the community and chapter in attendance. Department Adjutant Chad Richmond, Junior Vice Commander Carol Varner, and DAVA Senior Vice Commander Becky Culver were in attendance. MG (RET) Bowman was the guest speaker and in the end told us a story of the "Sheep Dog." Ask anyone in attendance and they will tell you it was a motivating moment. Having been a first time attendee it opened my eyes to what the chapter and Comrade Pastor Don Sellars' church does for the veterans in the area.

In November, I had the pleasure of visiting with Chapter 26 in Huntsville during the Veterans Day weekend. Junior Vice Commander, 1<sup>st</sup> District, J.B. Williams and I attended the executive committee meeting and following chapter meeting. With a new command team and having met a spend down challenge, they are back in the fundraising business. The chapter has a history of helping veterans in the community and they are looking forward to continuing the mission. The challenge, as with all chapters, is to get their membership more active and attending events. I challenge every chapter command team in the department to do a better job of engaging membership.



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While all is not well in our department it is evident we have a lot of good going on in the chapters. All of us must work on our relationships with others in one way or another. Remember we no longer wear the uniform, or the rank, of the services of our country. We all need to listen to one another's argument for or against points being brought before the chapter/department, and treat each other with respect. Remember some are easy to bruise and any "heated" discussion happening in the meetings will ultimately run off new members. I wouldn't want to enter the MMA Octagon at a chapter meeting, and I think we all feel the same.

For those of you who are Chapter Service Officers in this department, you are doing yeoman's work in taking care of veterans and increasing awareness while having a direct effect on membership in the DAV. When we help a veteran with their VA Claims paperwork we are on mission. We have been given the command in the DAV Mission Statement to help veterans, but especially those disabled their spouses, families and orphans to paraphrase. The NSOs in Montgomery are remaining busy due to your efforts and they appreciate the business, just ask them! Let's keep up the good work and keep the NSOs in the office earning their money.

Did you know that the NSO staff during the government shutdown continued to operate without

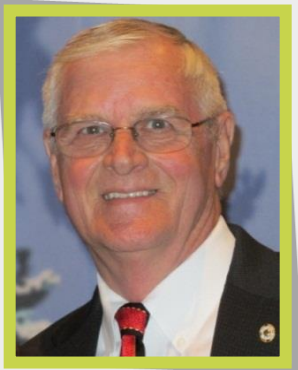
skipping a beat? Yes, the halls of the VA Regional Office in Montgomery were dark, but the light was on in DAV Chapter 12 Montgomery's chapter home. The NSOs continued to work on VA Claims and conduct their weekly appeals, helping many veterans who would have been left with no support during the government shutdown. We should give thanks to such a dedicated group of NSOs and the NSO office staff for their ability to go the extra mile.

As you can see, it has been a fantastic and busy six months since taking the position of your Senior Vice Commander. I have been to the four corners of state visiting chapters and I look forward to visiting more. I have been honored by the membership in entrusting me with the position, and I have enjoyed working with national, the department and all chapters. Each of our chapters faces challenges, but when I visit the chapters I see so much potential to continue the good work of the DAV. My challenge to each member is to keep doing fantastic work for the DAV and if you aren't too busy get out there and help grow this organization and make it better.

Respectfully,



*Laird Culver*



## DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT

Charles "Chad" D. Richmond



First, I would like to express my appreciation to Mike Michelotti and all of the members of his NSO office for all of the hard work they put out during the U.S. Government shutdown. They continued to provide services at the Regional Office, until they were kicked out, and then moved their operations to Chapter 12's chapter home just outside the gate to Maxwell AFB.

Birmingham had one of the biggest Veterans Day celebrations that they have had in many years. Our participation was one of the biggest, also. We hosted DAVA National Commander Susan Miller and DAV National Senior Vice Commander Ron Hope and were able to spend some time with them and show them a little of Birmingham and spend some time with some of our DAV and DAVA staff. I want to offer my sincere appreciation to Junior Vice Commander Carol Varner for all of her help in getting our

vehicles in the right place and lined up for the parade. That was no small task, considering we had eight vehicles in that parade. Our Veteran of the Year, PDC and Alternate 8th NEC Art Miller received his award, during the World Peace Luncheon, from LTGEN Stanley E. Clark III, the Director of the Air National Guard in Washington, DC. I'd like to that Chapter 4, Laird Culver, Art and Fay Miller for their participation in the parade and to the Alabama Artillery Group, led by John Church and Joe Johnson, for their cannons and limbers and for putting Commander Dave Riley and Yvonne Riley in a place of prominence in the parade.

The Golden Corral donations this year were very good, with \$25,028.02 total collected. That equated to \$6,320.05 for the Department service program. Chapter totals were as follows: Chapter 28 - \$690.00, Chapter 87 - \$5,592.00, Chapter 4 - \$1,220.78, Chapter 12 - \$1,172.13, Chapter 7 - \$3,109.40, Chapter 35 - \$1,736.00, Chapter 95 - \$2,093.00, Chapter 98 - \$6,381.71 and Chapter 33 - \$3,033.00. . I want to thank everyone who participated in making this a successful fundraiser, and challenge each of you to make next year even better.

I attended the Birmingham VAMC Stakeholder meeting in December and the two big pieces of news coming out of that meeting were that the Huntsville Clinic will open in

Spring of 2015 and the Birmingham Clinical Annex will open in the summer of 2015. It will be located five blocks from the VAMC on University Boulevard, and will have a 2300 space parking deck attached to it. That will make things a lot more convenient in Birmingham, than they have ever been.

Now is a good time for all of our Chapter Commanders and Adjutants to sit down and take a good look at their Chapter Constitution and Bylaws and ensure it is up to date and contains everything that is needed to outline chapter procedures and requirements for responsible and effective operation.

I hope everyone had a great Christmas and that each of our chapters reached out to our fellow veterans and their families who were in need of assistance during the holiday season. There is no reason we cannot continue that spirit throughout the year. I know many of you already have programs in place, and are doing a lot, even though these hard times.

Our annual Mid-Winter Conference is rapidly appearing on the horizon, and as this is being written, it appears that we will have the largest CSO certification class that we have ever had. There are more than 120 names on the Officer Reports for Service Officers, and more have been added in the last month or so. We should have some really good training on Saturday, so please attend the four classes being given. Chaplain Turner will also be having training for Chapter Chaplains, as well. We are extremely fortunate to have National 3<sup>rd</sup> Junior Vice Commander

Delphine Metcalf-Foster as our National guest. She will be assisting Lisa Lopez with her class on Sensitivity Training. Ms. Metcalf-Foster has devoted her lifetime to that particular area of need. And, of course, we will have another National Line Officer with us, who is not a guest, but our very own Commander, National 2<sup>nd</sup> Junior Vice Commander Dave Riley. I hope everyone in attendance at the conference attends all four of the classes scheduled, as they all have a bearing on some of the problems facing us in the Department at this time. We have changed the Treasurers class to a Town Hall meeting so you can ask your questions about the finance report and how to maintain good records. Having a good handle on finance procedures can save the chapter a lot of headaches and embarrassment.

I would like to thank all of the Department staff and chapters for all you have done for veterans and their families throughout the year and ask you to continue those traditions in the years to follow. Lastly, thank you to James Martin who has put in countless hours during the past year to make this newsletter a better product. Each succeeding issue was better than the last. Great job!

Respectfully,

*Chad Richmond*



### Upcoming Events

Jan 9-12, 2014:	Department of Alabama Mid-Winter Conference, Montgomery, AL
Jan 10-11, 2014:	Department of Tennessee Mid-Winter Conference, Murfreesboro, TN
Jan 25, 2014:	Town Hall Training
Feb 7-8, 2014:	Department of Mississippi Mid-Winter Conference, Vicksburg, MS
Feb 8, 2014:	Town Hall Meeting
Feb 20, 2014:	News and Views Input due
Feb 22-26, 2014:	National Mid-Winter Conference, Arlington, VA
Mar 8, 2014:	Town Hall Meeting
Mar 22, 2014:	Town Hall Training
Mar 30-Apr 4, 2014:	Winter Sports Clinic, Snow Mass, CO
Apr 12, 2014:	District 4 Meeting, TBA
Apr 20, 2014:	News and Views input due
Apr 26, 2014:	District 2 Meeting, VAMC Tuscaloosa
May 3, 2014:	District 1 Meeting, TBA
May 29-Jun 1, 2014:	Department of Mississippi Convention, Meridian, MS
Jun 5-8, 2014:	Department of Alabama Convention, Montgomery, AL
Jun 29-29, 2014:	Department of Tennessee Convention, Murfreesboro, TN
Jul 13-15, 2014:	State Commanders and Adjutants Orientation, Cold Spring, KY
Aug 8-12, 2014:	National Convention, Las Vegas, NV



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## DEPARTMENT LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

James D. Graves



Comrades,

Today we have less than ten days before Christmas, forget 12. May we all be in the Christmas spirit and are enjoying the season. It's also less than 30 days before mid-winter. Hope to see a bunch of you there. Here is the latest I have on the legislative process and how it will affect all of us.

First of all, there isn't a lot going on as far as actual work in the House or Senate. Both are trying to get the Defense Budget completed and then they ALL will head out of town for a little holiday season break. They will not be back until the middle of Jan 2014. The Defense bill is a big issue that will affect most of us one way or the other. The sequestration that brought Washington to a standstill some months ago is now back and being looked at with more sympathy than before. Defense will get some of the money back that they lost previously. Of course there will be a number of amendments attached to Defense from both houses, so we wait and see how many actually make it through.

Items which are HOT:

1. The House of Reps passed legislation that would reduce pay raises for active duty troops and retirement benefits for veterans. Expect to see any kind of raise to be cut by 1%. This action was taken without anyone being informed of the anticipated changes. This is all part of the Defense Budget that was passed by the House for 2013/2014. It now goes to the Senate where it is expected to pass.
2. Military retirees between the ages of 40 and 62 would receive an annual COLA increase to their retirement benefits at 1% less than the rise in inflation. Phased in over three years, the action will become effective in 2016. More on this later.
3. Military.Com states that the pension change could decrease veteran's benefits by nearly 20% in some years.
4. At last; Language in the 2014 National Defense

Authorization Act approved by the House and Senate, calls for the Defense Department to provide the Veterans Affairs Department with electronic access to all military records as of Jan 1, 2014. One would think our Defense Department belongs to the Russians the way they have fought to prevent release of medical information to Veterans Affairs.

5. The Ryan-Murray deal hits younger future retirees the hardest. Retirees younger than 62 and future retirees including currently serving members would see yearly COLA's in retirement cut by one % point below inflation until age 62. The umbrella group, Military Coalition, a group of more than 30 Military and Veteran associations, who are now rushing to kill this deal. Everyone from the President down had promised that any significant changes to retirement would be "grandfathered", impacting only future generations of military personnel.

6. One clear item that stood out in the bill was a deal reached to keep Tricare fees unchanged.

The Veterans Compensation Rates Tables have been posted and are available for review. Chad has passed these alone to the chapters so you can review them there.

Best wishes for the holiday season and a Happy New Year to all.

Respectfully,

*James Graves*

[Contact your House Representative](#)

[Contact your Senate Representative](#)



**1<sup>ST</sup> DISTRICT JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER**

J.B. Williams



Special Holiday Greeting Comrades!! Time is short now, so I hope all of you have completed your Christmas shopping so you can concentrate on spending some quality time with your family during the holidays.

On Nov 21<sup>st</sup>, Jonathan Flanary, Commander, Chapter 51 (Athens) was admitted to the hospital. Since then, we have learned that Jonathan has been diagnosed with cancer. At this point, the medical staff believes the cancer has been recognized early enough to provide us with a hopeful prognosis for a successful recovery.

Also add Victor Volpi and his family to your prayer list. He is the Commander for Chapter 18 in Guntersville. Commander Volpi has been having some medical problems with his feet, but seems to be doing a lot better. Mrs. Bennie Willingham is to have surgery and would like all your prayers, Brother Wallace Willingham has visited veterans in all the care facilities around Decatur for many years and I would like to thank all those that have done the same.

Thank you Chapter 51 (Athens) for hosting our next Annual District 1 meeting. More information about this will be published in the next News and Views, but for now,

please mark May 3<sup>rd</sup> (2014) on your new 2014 calendars and plan to attend.

Chapter 63 (Muscles Shoals) and Chapter 18 (Guntersville) continue to do a great job transporting our Veterans to their medical appointments. Both of these chapters have also continued their extensive involvement in community service work. Thank you Chapter 63 and Chapter 76(Cullman) for the support you are providing our Veterans.

It is my hope that all of our Chapters will remember our Veterans during the Holiday Season. This can really be a lonely time of year for them. A quick phone call, a card or note by mail or a short visit can brighten their day and lift their spirits. Also – this is a great way to tell them about the DAV and what the DAV does for Veterans. This can be a great membership recruiting tool. If they are not able to drive to your meetings, help them find a means of transportation to get there. If they are not physically able to attend, explain that their membership is still valuable and means a lot to Veterans as the DAV remains one of the largest organizations leading the fight for Veteran Rights.

I wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. See you at the DAV Mid-Winter Conference, January 9<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

Respectfully,

*J.B. Williams*



Dave is enjoying the evening – His face says it all!



Our Veteran of the Year, PDC and Alternate 8th NEC Art Miller received his award, during the World Peace Luncheon, from LTGEN Stanley E. Clark III, the Director of the Air National Guard in Washington, DC.

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## 2<sup>ND</sup> DISTRICT JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER

Carol I. Varner



### District 2 – A ‘Partnership’ of Chapters in Motion

Before I get into the ‘specifics’ of ALL the “**wonder and workings**” within **District 2**, I want to take a minute to offer a couple of very SPECIAL expressions of “Thank You”. Have you ever stopped to think how much ‘work’ goes on behind the scenes to run an efficient and productive DAV Department?? Of course, it takes all of our chapters and many dedicated individuals - - but I want to recognize TWO workers that significantly add to the success and recognition of Alabama Department DAV. First is our Department Adjutant Chad Richmond. He is absolutely the GLUE the keeps the Department together and running smoothly. Yes, all of our Chapters are out there working hard, completing reports and meeting deadlines. But Adj Richmond is the one that consistently “reminds” (and prods) us about all the “due-in/due-out requirements and deadlines”. This, my friends, is what provides the success we enjoy as a department. I could continue on with an exhaustive list of other ‘behind the scene’ actions and functions attributable to Chad Richmond - like all the demanding requirements of Mid-Winter Conference and June Convention – but I want to reserve some time and space to recognize my own District Chapters (smile). The ‘SECOND’ individual I want to recognize and THANK is James Martin, our News & Views Editor/Publisher. His keen eye for the reporting layout, substantive display and astute attention to detail (thanks for correcting our spelling and grammar- smile) provides an ultra-professional publication that “gets” DAV Alabama noticed throughout the country. And if you think it is easy – just give it a try!! I would love to have one tenth of his editorial talents and computer skills. Thank you James Martin for presenting our best side and making us LOOK SO GOOD!!

Now for some “brag time” and “thank you” for my District 2 Chapters!! I appreciate the fact that EVERY chapter within District 2 – filed appropriate forms with the IRS to maintain their 501(c)(4) status of exemption from Income Tax. These had to be filed by Nov 15<sup>th</sup>. Thank you Chapters for your diligence in doing some of the things we normally “don’t” like to do

–PAPERWORK! As you know, NOT filing, or not filing on time can be a show stopper. And what a mess you will get into if you are required to request your status be reinstated.

Congratulations Andy Haydu on your recent election as the new Commander for **Chapter 1 (Tuscaloosa)**. Thank you Commander Haydu for being willing to accept the responsibility of this important position at Chapter 1. I truly appreciate you and your Chapter hosting our next Annual District 2 meeting scheduled for April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2014. It was gracious of your members to take time to visit Frank Crow, our Department Homeless Veteran Coordinator, during his rehab period at Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center. Thank you Past Chapter Commander Bill Feely for the fine job you did while serving in Chapter 1. We wish you well in your future personal endeavors, but hope you will still find time to help the Chapter with projects and services for Veterans. So far within District 2, Chapter 1 continues to assist the most Veterans with claims. For the Holiday Season, Chapter 1 will be providing \$1,000.00 of financial assistance to local Veterans and their families.

BIG Congratulations are in order for **Chapter 4** (Birmingham). They finally met the requirements of DAV National Constitution Bylaws & Regulations and have officially been “removed” from their ‘10 year Spend Down Status’ – and three years early to boot!. This gets you out of National’s “negative watch” and allows you to conduct fund raisers. Thank you Commander Ron Sellers and Senior Vice Commander Don Sellers for your extreme focus and perseverance in leading your Chapter to such a successfully conclusion to this long standing problem. You did in 8 months, something that had not been accomplished in the last seven years of that Chapter. And look how productive Chapter 4 is now. From Nov 1<sup>st</sup> through Nov 11<sup>th</sup>, Chapter 4 collected donations at the Hoover Golden Corral. Then on Veterans Day, they provided a couple of vehicles for DAV officers in the National Veterans Day Parade in Birmingham. On Nov 23, they served a wonderful Thanksgiving meal to over 130 Homeless and Veterans, plus provided each with a “care package” of personal items. Every Thursday, they assist 40-50 Veterans with a variety of needs. And to round out the Holiday Season, Chapter 4 will host their Chapter Christmas Party on Thursday, Dec 19<sup>th</sup>. Then will complete the season by visiting Veterans at the VA Medical Center in Birmingham and handing out gifts of personal items and fruit.

Thank you **Chapter 21** (Piedmont) for providing volunteers to assist with donation collections at Oxford Golden Corral (Nov 1<sup>st</sup> - Nov 11<sup>th</sup>). Besides helping our Chapters, it financially helps our DAV Department too. Chapter 21 has also been busy helping Veterans. Just recently, they provided food, gas and firewood for a Veteran in need. Thank you DAVA Unit 21 for paying the power bill for this Veteran.



On Saturday, Dec 14<sup>th</sup>, Chapter 21 visited Veterans in the Piedmont Nursing Home and provided some gifts as a "Thank You Veterans for Your Service" gesture!! The Chapter hosted their Holiday Dinner on Dec 10 to let the members know they were appreciated. Please keep Chapter 21's Chaplain Travis Ivey in your prayers as he continues to recover from recent surgery on his intestinal tract.

Thank you **Chapter 27** (in Pell City) for your generous support of the National Veterans Day Parade in Birmingham. The two trucks and trailers with the famous Alabama Artillery cannons, limbers and period costume attire were some of the most eye-catching in the parade. Thank you Past Chapter Commander Joe Johnson, and members Mike and Doug Church for providing these. Our Alabama DAV Department Commander Dave Riley (also 2<sup>nd</sup> National Junior Vice Commander) and his wife Yvonne looked great perched atop the limber on the leading cannon. They were followed by the second cannon and limber sporting two female Disabled Veterans – Melissa Thomas, Senior Vice Commander for Chapter 27 and me (Carol Varner) as Dist 2 JVC. It was great having Chapter 27 members help with vehicle line up for the DAV section of the parade. This was accomplished in record time, allowing us a little time to chat with other Veterans. Also, thank you for providing volunteers to assist with donation collections at the Oxford and Pelham Golden Corrals (Nov 1<sup>st</sup> - Nov 11<sup>th</sup>). Chapter 27 continues to provide consistent support for the Jefferson County and St Clair County "Veterans Courts". Adjutant Dale Onstine was hospitalized on Dec 8<sup>th</sup>. He is out of the hospital now, but please remember him in your prayers as he deals with some medical issues.

Thank you **Chapter 28** (Oneonta) for providing volunteers to work the donation collection efforts at the Golden Corral in Centerpoint. Chapter members have spent the last several months compiling a rather comprehensive record of the "History of Chapter 28". I understand it is in final draft now and will possibly be published in January or February. What interesting reading this will be? I look forward to its review of the hard work recorded by and "on" the members of this chapter. During the week before Christmas, Chapter 28 will be providing 2 twenty pound smoked hams to Three Hots and a Cot in Birmingham. What a heartfelt way to remember disadvantaged Veterans during the Holiday Season.

Congratulations Mike Welborne on your recent election as the new Commander for **Chapter 33** (Clanton). Thank you Commander Welborne for being willing to accept this responsibility. Special thanks and appreciation to Past Commander Clifton Blum for the outstanding record and performance of Chapter 33 under his leadership. After the heartbreak of losing your wife, and the challenge of seeking 'normal' again in your life, we are grateful that you have elected to serve as one of the Chapters Service Officers as the Chapter continues to man the DAV Service Office in the

Chilton County Courthouse. This is such a valuable service the chapter is providing our Veterans. Also, thank you Chapter 33 for manning eleven straight days of volunteers to collect donations at the Pelham Golden Corral. And huge congratulations are in order – because your efforts placed you "fourth" overall in the state for total collections. This was only \$76.40 behind Chapter 7 (in Dist 4) who placed third. Quite a feat for such a small chapter. And I hear you have your heart and future efforts set on acquiring transportation for Veterans.

**Chapter 78** (Talladega) recently enjoyed a Christmas lunch to thank members for their hard work and support. During the Holiday Season, they will be providing help to several Veterans and their families for Christmas.

Congratulations **Chapter 98** (Anniston/Oxford) – you achieved the number "1" spot in the state with TOP donations collected at Oxford Golden Corral - \$6,381.71. Commander Gary Cobb, you and your members are to be commended for the extensive hours you worked. Your chapter is the only chapter that elected to man the Golden Corral every minute they were open from Nov 1<sup>st</sup> through Nov 11<sup>th</sup>. Wow - it certainly made a difference in the amount collected. The detailed 'color coded' worksheet you orchestrated a couple of months "before" the event allowed volunteers to select a sensible schedule that allowed for seamless operations. While there were a couple of volunteers that couldn't make their rotation, the 'depth' of your multi-layered schedule kept disruptions to a minimum. I truly hope other chapters in District 2 will learn from this and start planning NOW to schedule 'more' volunteers for next year. Chapter 98 is working closely with the hospital in Anniston to provide better service for Veterans. The chapter now has office space in the hospital, and has installed a computer and printer to assist with claims. Plus, members are visiting the hospitalized Veterans three times a week. What a great "membership recruiting tool!! It is so nice to have Frank Crow, Department Homeless Veteran Coordinator, "back" with you so soon after the amputation of his lower leg. And I hear he is already hard at work helping 'other' Veterans.

In closing, I want to sincerely thank our National and Department Officers that took time to come to Birmingham to participate in the National Veterans Day Events/Parade. These were National Senior Vice Commander Ron Hope, 2<sup>nd</sup> National Junior Vice Commander/Dept Cdr Dave Riley; 8<sup>th</sup> District National Executive Committeeman /Dept Adj Chad Richmond; DAVA National Commander Susan Miller; Dept Veteran of the Year Art Miller; Dept Senior Vice Commander Laird Culver; Dept District 4 Junior Vice Commander Faye Miller; and Dept DAVA Senior Vice Commander Becky Culver. What "great exposure" for the DAV.

Have Happy New Year. See you at the Mid-Winter Conference in Montgomery 9-11 January 2014.

Respectfully,

*Carol Varner*



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OPPORTUNITY.

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### 3<sup>RD</sup> DISTRICT JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER

Charles E. Waugh



Hello to all the Comrades, family members and friends of the 3<sup>rd</sup> District and the Department of Alabama Disabled American Veterans (DAV). The 3<sup>rd</sup> District has been very busy the last two months with Chapter tasks and Veterans Day events that lasted into December. The holiday celebrations to enjoy family and friends and all the blessings that have been given to us were well deserved and we give thanks to our Creator for His blessings.

January has come again and our mid-winter conference is upon us for 2014. It is time to get trained-up again and ensure that we get the new members and old

members to service office training so that we can continue the DAV's mission of assisting veterans and their families. I will see you at Mid-Winter Conference in Montgomery, Alabama on January 9-12, 2014. I would also like to say thank you to all the members of the 3<sup>rd</sup> District and their spouses and family members for allowing your love ones to do the work they do in assisting veterans in our communities, because I know and the veterans they assist know they could be doing something else. Thank you again. May God continue to bless you, your families, and the DAV. Be safe and enjoy this holiday season!!!

Respectfully,

*Charles Waugh*

### 4<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER

Fay Miller



It's the beginning of a new year. I hope everyone had a great holiday season and that we are all ready to tackle the tasks that need to be accomplished before Convention. We stayed busy the last couple of months. The Peanut Festival in Dothan took place the First part of November as well as the events at our Golden Corrals. We were in Birmingham for the National Veterans Day Parade and had a blast. As always, Chad was the perfect host for all that attended. I would like to say many thanks to those who helped out and attended this event. Carol Varner did an excellent job (I do not know how she does it), at getting the vehicles lined up for the parade. Well done Carol. After the parade we had the pleasure of attending Chapter 7's meeting in Mobile. They need a larger place.

From there we were off to Alexandria La to attend the LA Mid-Winter Conference and attend CSO Training there. If you did not realize it by now the (we) are

Art and I. We attend the CSO training elsewhere in order to run our Hospitality Room. With the Chapters taking over the Mid-Winter and Convention starting in 2015 then the Hospitality Room will be their responsibility so things can get back to somewhat normal for us. After returning from LA my chapter had a Boston Butt & Rib sale, we sold 100 Butts and 45 Ribs before Thanksgiving. My chapter provided 90 to 100 Christmas gifts for Veterans and spouses in Nursing Home, Assisted Living Facilities and names that was given to us by the VA in our area.

I hope that all the District Commanders and staff will attend the training held at Mid-Winter. There is much to put out so all can get what needs to be accomplished without error the first time. I did make it to all but one Chapter over the past several months. Each of those is doing an outstanding job and I hope they continue to do so. We are still short on membership and I encourage each and every one of you to do your best to sign up new members.

Respectfully,

*Fay Miller*

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**Department Pages**

[Department Website](#)

[Department Facebook Page](#)



How many claims were filed in 2012?

There are many ways to recruit **new** members into the DAV, can you think of a couple of ways? Share them with three or more Comrades at convention. 1...2...3.

Dave had the honor of participating in the Hollywood parade. Thanks for representing National as well as the Department of Alabama. One of our own "Out Front" getting the DAV mission out to our fellow Veterans.

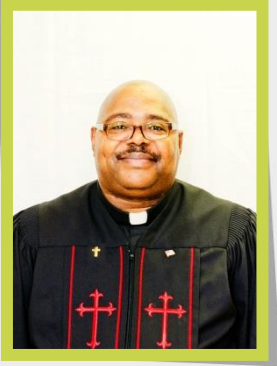


Dave and Chad are actively participating in many events throughout the State and Nationally. At convention make sure to thank them for a job well done.

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## DEPARTMENT CHAPLAIN

Vincent Turner



Grace and joy to everyone. I can't believe the year is almost over. The conference is just around the corner and I can't wait to see everyone. To all Chaplains we will be having training again. I am asking that all Chaplains attend and if you will not be in attendance please have someone else attend on your behalf. Training is important because it helps us learn how to help the people we serve.

### PRAYER: OUR TIME SAVER

Talking to God helps us to be wise steward of time because:

**Provides clear direction.** Prayer always gives you guidance and eliminates confusion. For instance, when King Jehoshaphat heard that three armies were on their way to attack Israel, he immediately sought the Lord through fasting and prayer. God gave him a strategy that resulted in victory (2 Chron. 20:3-25).

**Prevents wrong decisions.** Prayer helps you avoid costly mistakes, delays, and other long-difficulties. The apostle Paul wisely changed his plans when the Lord revealed that he was to preach the gospel in Macedonia rather than in the east (Acts 16:6-9). If you follow God's plan instead of our own, we will always experience His blessing.

**Eliminates worry and anxiety.** Paul says in (Philippians 4:6-7) that, "In everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God...will guard your hearts and mind in Jesus." As a believer, you don't have to fret; God has everything under control. Remember, anxiety is a sign you are on your schedule, not His.

**Produces peacefulness.** If you begin each day with God. He will give you supernatural peace that can increase your productivity. Every morning as you read the Bible, ask Him to make you sensitive to the Holy Spirit and keep you from sin (Ps. 119:133).

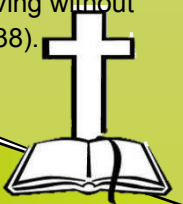
**Helps you discern between busyness and fruitfulness.** You must be careful to invest your time, energy in resources in those things of eternal value. Don't say yes to every opportunity; prayerfully consider which on God has ordained for you to pursue.

Respectfully,

*Vincent Turner*

### Ten Ways to Love Your Neighbor

1. Love your enemies (v.27).
2. Bless those who mistreat you (v.28).
3. Don't demand your rights (v.29).
4. Give to everyone who asks of you (v.30).
5. Treat everyone the same way you'd want them to treat you (v.31).
6. Do good to those who've done nothing for you and won't repay you (v.33).
7. Freely share what you have without expecting anything in return (vv.34-35).
8. Be merciful to people who are ungrateful-even those who are evil (v.36)
9. Don't judge or condemn anyone, even if he deserves it(v.37)
10. Recognize the immeasurable blessing of giving without reservation (.38).



## Chaplain's Corner

### MY FATHER ...

Loves me [John 3:16](#)

Cares for Me [Psalm 103](#)

Renews Me [Isaiah 40:31](#)

Protects Me [Psalm 23:4](#)

Redeems Me [Job 19:25](#)

Is Preparing a Place for Me [Psalm 139](#)

Understands & Accepts Me [Psalm 139](#)

Guides & Teaches Me [Psalm 25:9](#)



**WOMEN'S VETERANS OF ALABAMA**

Lisa Lopez



truly inspiring, and provided many female veterans with much-needed information and networking opportunities.

According to statistics from the VA's Veteran Population Model, up to 10,000 women will separate from the military each year for the next 10 years. This means we must begin outreach efforts sooner, rather than later, to provide the information our veterans need. I encourage each Chapter to consider hosting some type of community event or forum this year. Feel free to contact me for information or assistance.

Respectfully,

*Lisa Lopez*

The last few months have been wonderfully busy for me. I've had the opportunity to meet with several of you and have spoken with or emailed many more. I would like to thank Charles Waugh for spearheading the event I attended in October; the Women Veterans Outreach in Smith's Station sponsored by DAV Chapter #66 and Crown Communities. The level of participation and support was

**DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS AUXILIARY**

Margaret Powell



Comrades,

Due to my busy schedule, there is no article for this issue of the News & Views. Thank you for all of your support and keep up the outstanding work throughout all the communities.

Respectfully,

*Margaret Powell*



**News & Views Article Due Dates:**

**March Issue** – Due February 20, 2014

**April Issue** – Due March 20, 2014 \* **Incorrect date in last issue**

**June Issue** – Due May 20 2014 \* **Incorrect date in last issue**

**August Issue** – Due July 20 2014

All Articles due the **20<sup>th</sup>** of the month prior to the publishing of the newsletter. (January due December 15<sup>th</sup> due to Holiday season)



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## NSO OFFICE SUPERVISOR

Michael Michelotti



I thank all the Chapter Service Officers for your hard work and I look forward to seeing you again at the upcoming chapter service officer's school.

The VA is offering over 8 million Veterans an opportunity to purchase an affordable dental plan. It's for Veterans with no dental coverage or those eligible for VA dental care who want to purchase additional coverage. For more information go to the following link:

VA Expanded benefits for residuals of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI); Veterans living with TBI who also have Parkinson's disease, certain types of dementia, depression, unprovoked seizures, or certain diseases of the hypothalamus and pituitary glands. Eligibility for the expanded benefits will depend upon the severity of the TBI and the time between the injury causing the TBI and the onset of the second illness.

We have noticed a slowdown in the turnaround time for Fully Developed Claims (FDC), approximately 6 months for a decision. Submitting a FDC along with a Disability Benefits Questionnaire (DBQ) is still the fastest way to process a claim, traditional claims process can take 18 months for a decision.

### DBQ Frequently Asked Questions

#### DBQ Frequently Asked Questions

#### **Q: What are Disability Benefits Questionnaires (DBQ)?**

A: Disability Benefits Questionnaires (DBQs) are downloadable forms created for Veterans' use in the evaluation process for disability benefits. DBQs will help speed the processing of Veterans' disability compensation and pension claims.

DBQs allow Veterans and Service-members to have more control over the disability claims process; It provides them the option of using their primary care provider (VA or at their expense, a primary care provider in their community) instead of completing a Compensation and Pension evaluation at a VA facility. The streamlined forms use check boxes and standardized language so that the disability rating can be made accurately and quickly.

#### **Q: Why were DBQs developed?**

A: DBQs were developed to streamline the collection of necessary medical evidence for the purpose of processing Veterans' claims. DBQs provide Veterans with an improved means to submit medical evidence to support their claims.

#### **Q: Where can you find DBQs?**

A: DBQs can be viewed on our [Department website](#) or the [VA website](#)

### NSO Office Information

**VA Regional Office**  
**[345 Perry Hill Road](#)**  
**[Montgomery, AL 36109](#)**

Office: 334-213-3365  
 Fax: 334-213-5661

#### NSO Office hours for Veteran contact:

Monday – Friday: 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM

*Friday's: NSO's Unavailable for interviews*

#### Office hours for telephone calls:

Monday – Friday: 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM



### eBenefits Information

Once a decision is rendered in either a claim or an appeal, we will have the opportunity to review the decision prior to your notification. If the decision is in accordance with the law, we will release the decision to the VA and provide you with an unofficial notification by mail. You can track the status of your claim through e-Benefits by signing up at:

[Click here for eBenefits.](#)

**Q: What are the benefits of using DBQs?**

A: DBQs simplify the documentation of medical conditions. By completing check-the-box DBQs rather than generating long narrative summaries, it is anticipated the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) will reduce the time it takes to make a claims decision. Also, providers treating Veterans who are familiar with their conditions can speed the process by completing DBQs for their patients.

**Q: How do DBQs help with VA's Fully Developed Claims (FDC) Program?**

A: DBQs are valuable for Fully Developed Claims processing because they provide medical information that is directly relevant to determining a disability rating, which helps ensure the VA's ratings specialists have precisely the information they need to start processing the claim.

**Q: Will VA reimburse private providers' examination costs or travel costs to the Veteran for DBQ-related actions?**

A: No. This information is printed on the DBQ forms and appears on the Internet website where DBQs are publicly available. Veterans have the option to take a DBQ to their private provider or VHA clinician for completion, but Veteran are responsible for any related co-pay or costs, including costs for travel or testing. (A Veteran is always entitled to an examination and any required testing at no charge for a scheduled compensation appointment that has been requested by VBA.) Asking your primary care provider to complete a DBQ is no different than asking your provider to write a letter or note providing medical evidence of a medical condition in support of a claim. The same co-pay rules apply equally to both situations.

**Q: Are DBQs mandatory?**

A: No. Use of DBQs is not mandatory.

**Q: Will DBQs reduce claims processing time?**

A: Yes. If a provider uses a DBQ to evaluate a medical condition for a disability claim, it has the potential to significantly reduce the processing time.

**Q: Will VA make these forms available for additional medical conditions?**

A: There are no more DBQs planned for public release. With few exceptions, the current DBQs cover every condition for which a Veteran can receive compensation.

**Q: How far back can previous medical test results be used as evidence when completing a DBQ?**

A: There are no set rules regarding the age of available test results. If previous tests reflect the current medical condition of the Veteran, the examiner should indicate that those test results reflect the Veteran's present condition and degree of disability.

**Fully Developed Claim**

A FDC must meet the following criteria (all below information/evidence must be received simultaneously):

1. It must be a rating-related claim for live compensation or live pension submitted on the [VA Form 21-526EZ](#) application or the [VA Form 21-527EZ](#) applications, as applicable.
2. The claimant must submit, with the claim, a Fully Developed Claim Certification signed and dated by the claimant or the authorized representative.
3. The claimant must submit with the Fully Developed Claim Certification all of the following that apply:  
All, if any, relevant private medical treatment records and an identification of any treatment records from a Federal treatment facility such as a VA medical center
  - For Guard and Reserve members, any and all service treatment and personnel records in the custody of his/her unit(s)
  - For pension claims, all necessary income and net-worth information
  - For special monthly pension claims, a completed [VA Form 21-2680](#), *Examination for Housebound Status or Permanent Need For Regular Aid And Attendance*, or, if claiming special monthly pension based on nursing home attendance, a [VA Form, 21-0779](#), *Request For Nursing Home Information in Connection With Claim For Aid And Attendance*.
  - If claiming dependents, a completed [VA Form 21-686c](#), *Declaration of Status of Dependents*
  - If submitting a DBQ from a private (non VA) provider, a [VA Form 21-4142](#), with the following comment in block 9: "FOR DBQ PURPOSES ONLY"
4. The claimant must be available to report for a VA examination, if required.



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**Q: Which DBQs are not available for use by private providers?**

A: There are no DBQs for the following medical examinations:  
 Initial Examination for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder  
 Hearing Loss and Tinnitus  
 Residuals of Traumatic Brain Injury  
 Cold Injury Residuals  
 Prisoner of War Examination Protocol  
 Gulf War Medical Examination  
 General Medical Examination for Compensation Purposes  
 General Medical Examination for Pension Purposes

**Q: Why are those DBQs not available for public use?**

A: VA has determined that the examinations required to complete those DBQs either require specialized training, specialized equipment, or specialized testing generally not available through private providers or, if these examinations are available, the cost to the Veteran would be so great as to render the DBQ cost-prohibitive. For these reasons, VA has determined that it is in the Veteran's best interest to still require these examinations to be conducted by a VA clinician. FOR MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS

**Q: Why would a Veteran need a DBQ if VA has most of their medical records?**

A: In some cases, VBA can use information in the Veteran's health record to adjudicate the claim, if the information is sufficiently complete for rating purposes. However, if the information in the health record is incomplete, VA will require a DBQ to provide the additional medical evidence needed.

**Q: What happens if VBA finds a DBQ completed by a private physician or a VHA clinician insufficient?**

A: Incomplete DBQ forms typically do not contain the information needed to rate the disability and, therefore, are considered insufficient, if the additional information cannot be obtained, VA may have to schedule the Veteran for a VA examination thereby defeating the purpose of the DBQ.

**Q: Can DBQs be completed during a regular medical appointment?**

A: Yes. Many of the DBQs can be completed in a short amount of time. The estimated respondent burden for each DBQ varies from 15 minutes to 1 hour depending on the complexity of the form and the conditions covered. The estimated respondent burden is listed on the DBQ form itself.

**Q: Should providers discuss the completed DBQ findings with the Veteran?**

A: The providers are the most qualified to discuss the Veteran's health, but cannot and should not offer any opinions as to the outcome of the disability benefits claim. VBA, not the provider, makes the decision on the Veteran's disability claim. The provider should remind the Veteran that the examination and DBQ report are only one part of the total evidence reviewed by VBA in making a disability benefit decision.

**Q: Will private providers be trained or certified in VA examination requirements, similar to VA clinicians?**

A: No, private providers completing DBQs are providing medical information on a Veteran they are treating. This is no different than letters previously submitted related to a Veteran's condition. DBQs ensure that primary care providers gather the medical information VA needs to determine the disability rating.

**Q: Who can complete a mental health DBQ?**

A: In order to conduct an initial examination for mental disorders, the examiner must meet one of the following criteria:

- a board-certified or board-eligible psychiatrist;
- a licensed doctorate-level psychologist;
- a doctorate-level mental health provider under the close supervision of a board-certified or board-eligible psychiatrist or licensed doctorate-level psychologist;
- a psychiatry resident under close supervision of a board-certified or board-eligible psychiatrist or licensed doctorate-level psychologist; or
- a clinical or counseling psychologist completing a one-year internship or residency (for purposes of a doctorate-level degree) under close supervision of a board-certified or board-eligible psychiatrist or licensed doctorate-level psychologist.

In order to conduct a review examination for mental disorders, the examiner must meet one of the following criteria:

- any criteria from above; or
- be a licensed clinical social worker (LCSW), a nurse practitioner, a clinical nurse specialist, or a physician assistant, under close supervision of a board-certified or board-eligible psychiatrist or licensed doctorate-level psychologist.

Respectfully,

*Mike Michelotti*





**RECRUITMENT CORNER – UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES**

Follow the recommendations of the Department Senior Vice Commander - Recruit



Calhoun  
Community  
College



Birmingham-Southern College



**Recruit at a University or College near you today! Veterans are everywhere.**  
(Click to visit their website)

One last picture of the Hollywood parade Dave was attending on behalf everyone in the Department of Alabama



**Holidays and Other Information**

- January 1 – New Year’s Day
- January 20 – Martin Luther King Day
- February 2 – Groundhog Day
- February 2 – Super Bowl
- February 14 – Valentine’s Day
- February 17 – President’s Day

**Astrological Signs for September and October**

December 22 – January 19	Capricorn
January 20 – February 18	Aquarius
February 19 – March 20	Pisces
March 21 – April 19	Aries



**Welcome to  
2014**

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