

   LOUISIANA / MISSISSIPPI BVA REGIONAL GROUP, INC

                    335 West Bridge Street

                    Breaux Bridge, LA, 70517

**FROM YOUR PRESIDENT:** Hello all.  Yeah, this is a touch late and for that I apologize.  It has been a busy week as I have been collecting photographs from many so that I can create a slide show / movie to present to all of you and the BVA.  I have spoken with HQ and they will get it on the web site to show off our capabilities.  You will, of course, be a few days ahead of that however.

I do want to pass along my most sincere thanks to all the members of our RG for the support and trust you have given me over the last few years.  Without that I would not have been able to perform for you in a way that you not only expect, but deserve.  I am truly honored and humbled to have been the president of the RG and ask only that the same support and trust you placed in me, you place in Raquel, Claude, Gary, Joe and Corine.   They have been there for me and knowing them, I guarantee they will be there for you.  Please do not be shy, ask of them anything you would’ve asked me, and rest assured that if need be they know that I am here to support them in any way possible.

Through the combined efforts of all within our RG, we have set the standard for others to follow because as we have proven so many times in the past, we are not of the attitude of “We can’t” but rather of the more enjoyable group that believes in the “WE CAN!” belief.

With that I will now work on the movie project and hope to have it done this weekend.  Meanwhile, Be safe, stay strong and lets look out for each other!

With Warmest Regards,

Tracy R. Ferro





 LOUISIANA / MISSISSIPPI BVA REGIONAL GROUP, INC

 335 West Bridge Street

 Breaux Bridge, LA, 70517

 NEWSLETTER – Summer 2022

In case you didn’t know, Summer is here! According to my calendar it arrived on June 21. It seems as if we had two weeks of Spring in April and then Summer hit, with 90 degree days in May and 100’s in June, what is July and August going to bring? Even with the heat everyone still enjoyed their Easter, Mother’s Day, Memorial Day, the LA/MS Banquet and Meeting, Flag Day, Father’s Day, Juneteenth and everything in between. We were also able to deliver three Bronze Braille American Flags, one to Baton Rouge South CBOC, one to the Louisiana School for the Low Vision and one to the National Vietnam War Museum in Weatherford, TX. We were also able to present a beeping kickball and beeping frisbees to the LA School for the Low Vision in Baton Rouge. It was pure joy to watch the children kick the ball around and be able to follow it, even the totally blind, because it was beeping. The frisbees which were made from a soft rubber material with a battery-operated beeper in the center were a great hit, one child would throw the beeping frisbee and two others would follow and retrieve the frisbee, one little girl said “now I can find the frisbee where ever it lands”. This was LA/MS BVA Regional Group money that was very well spent.

On June 11 the Louisiana/Mississippi BVA Regional Group, Inc. held its annual banquet and Business Meeting at Middendorf’s Restaurant in Slidell, LA, it was simulcast to Noah’s Café in Lafayette, LA and anyone else that wish to join via the Microsoft Teams Platform. The Slidell location hosted 13 BVA members, a number of VA personnel, representatives from other Low Vision organizations and a large number of escorts and significant others. The Lafayette location had 6 BVA members, 4 prospective members and 6 escorts/helpers. Chaplin Corine Stanley, National BVA Vice-President Paul Mimms, BVA Executive Director Donald Overton and Kendra Farrow, Director of National Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision (NRTC) located at Mississippi State University were able to join us virtually. The event began with the Business Meeting. Naturally when we are trying something for the first time, simulcasting from one restaurant to another restaurant there are going to be problems. There was problems broadcasting from Middendorf’s because they did not have enough band width to support our plans, so we went to plan “B”, but still had problems with the audio. Ms. Stanley was supposed to open the meeting with a prayer, but we could not get connected with her, so Tracy led us in a prayer. The Pledge of allegiance was then recited. The first order of business was to elect new officers, since President Tracy Ferro was elected National BVA Treasurer he could not run for the RG Presidency, Raquel Welsh was elected to the Office. Claude Roberts was elected Vice-President, Gary Schoelerman was reelected as Secretary and Joe Burns was reelected Treasurer. Gary Schoelerman and Joe Burns were elected as Delegates to the National BVA Convention. We then adjourned to the Banquet and reestablished contact with Chaplin Corine Stanley and she led us in a prayer for the success of the Regional Group and a blessing of the meal. During the meal we had virtual greetings from the BVA National Vice-President and the BVA National Executive Director. Followed by a talk from NRTC Director Kendra Farrow about the projects their Center is working on. Debra Gilley, Chief of the Biloxi BRC, who was there in person, then told of the progress of the BRC. Gary Schoelerman then reported on the progress of donating the Bronze Braille American Flags. It was then time for the important stuff, the Raffle and Door Prizes! The Raffle was for a 43” very smart TV (donated by Dawn from Simplified Insurance), 2nd prizes was a WI-FI controlled thermostat (donated by Tracy Ferro) and 3rd prize was $100 Bill (donated by Corine Stanley). The door prizes were a variety of items both donated from merchants and by BVA members. The Lafayette location also had a number of door prizes, everyone won a prize, but the biggest prize was the work of BVA member Shawntina Gibson for her work in locating the restaurant, decorating, purchasing items and getting merchants to donate gift cards and coupons. She even offered BEER, WINE and MARGARITAS, who could ask for anything more? The bottom line is that everyone had a great time and with the improvement of our technical skills it will only get better next year. We also have to thank Alicia Bean, one of the VA BRC instructors, for her help in working with Tracy Ferro and her expertise in trying to set up our communications system, she went above and beyond.

On June 25 the Louisiana/Mississippi BVA Regional Group, Inc presented a Bronze Braille American Flag and identifying plaque to the National Vietnam War Museum in Weatherford, TX on its Grand Opening. There was a large crowd 250 to 300 people the temperature was 104, but it was a dry heat, and first the politicians spoke (a hot wind blew and the temperature got hotter) and then speakers from five of the military services, the Space Force was not represented, spoke about their Branch’s involvement in Vietnam. They too had problems with their audio system and everything was delayed. Due to the delays and the heat, the ceremony was halted early. I did not have the opportunity to present the flag before the large group, but did present it later in the shade to the man who was responsible for the museum Jim Messenger, he apologized for not allowing me to present the flag and speak before the crowd, but he and many of the others were wilting in the heat. He said he would find a place of honor to display the flag and plaque. I also gave him a bundle of BVA brochures that he said he would make available to the patrons. The museum is in its infancy, but is very informative about the history of Vietnam and its many wars, remember the WW II Museum in New Orleans opened in 2000 in a small warehouse with a relatively small number of artifacts and with its expansion and growth now is considered one of the finest museums in the world. The National Vietnam War Museum displays many of the things the infantry had to deal with from boobie traps to C-Rations. Even though the museum is located at the entrance to Ft. Wolters, the primary helicopter training school for the U.S. Army and later also for the Marines and Air Force, there was little emphasis on helicopters, other than a few pictures and murals depicting landings inserting GI’s into landing zones and a couple on static display UH-1 “Huey’s” on display outside and a OH-23 “Raven” training helicopter on display inside. One of the other displays of significance was a monument to the 5,000 military dogs that were left in country when their handlers were sent home in 1973, the dogs were listed as surplus, and thus left along with tons of other equipment.

Next quarter, July 1 to September 30 we have the doldrums of Summer. We will have the BVA National Convention in Washington D.C. from August 22 till August 26. It would be great if we could have a large number of members from the LA/MS Regional Group, it may be warm in D.C. but the hotels will be air conditioned. The Mall is shaded by a number of large trees, so you can enjoy walking from one spectacular monument to another spectacular monument. The many museums and the Smithsonian are air conditioned. The convention will be held at the Hyatt on the Mall, the BVA has been given a special discounted rate of $140 per night for the rooms. All meetings and the vendors display area will be within the hotel, bring your sweater to the meeting rooms, they are always very cold. If you have never been to a BVA Convention or any other Blind Organizations Convention, you must try it. The Conventions are a great way to meet fellow low vision or blind individuals and see what the latest and greatest items the vendors have to help us. Make your reservations now! If you can’t make this one start saving for next year, the location should be announced at the convention.

We are trying to put together a little history of the Louisiana/Mississippi Regional Group, beginning when we were separate Groups. Joe Burns has graciously offered to begin our history with his recollection of his involvement with the Louisiana Regional Group. Hopefully members who have knowledge of the LA or MS BVA history will also write a little of their recollections and eventually we can put together a chronological history. The BVA has a long and rich history and so do the Regional Groups. There is a comprehensive history of the National BVA and we believe that we should also have one for our Region.

Here is your chance to ask the big BOSS! Niki Sandlan, who is the Director of the Blind Rehab System and is in charge of the VIST and BROS program as well as the BRC’s, but she has no authority to hire or fire, this is up to the VAMC Director. She has some influence on the program. She will be conducting a Q and A at the National BVA Convention, if you have a question, submit it to the District Director, our President Raquel Welch rdwelch21@gmail.com or Secretary Gary Schoelerman gschoelerman@gmail.com. Sample questions that will be sent in are: Why is there only one VIST in each VA Hospital System, when some systems have a population of over 2 million and a neighboring system may have a population of less than 750,000? Why do some VAHS have no BROS? Will all VIST eventually be Virtual?

What’s on your mind? Submit your question for the Boss now so they can be reviewed and merged for Ms. Sandlan.

**EVER WONDER...**

* Why the sun lightens our hair, but darkens our skin ❓❓ 🤷 ‍
* Why don't you ever see the Headline 'Psychic Wins Lottery' ❓❓ 🤷 ‍
* Why is 'abbreviated' such a long word ❓❓ 🤷

**AN APP FOR THE BIRDS (Merlin Bird ID – Cornell University) by Carl Lewis**

I was going to write about my house remodel. How we filled a Pod storage container and then moved what was left to the other side of the house and how hard it is to move around. But I am living that nightmare. So, I thought I would share an app that I think is fantastic. I like to sit on my deck, drink a frosty adult beverage and listen to the birds. Now I can learn what kind of birds I am listening to. The app is called Merlin Bird ID, it is free app. I have shared this app with number of people and some say that when they are trying to use it, they get something that says it cost $40. just swipe past it; it is a free app. When you first open the app it will ask you to download the section of the country you live in, so it knows the birds. You can take a picture of the bird or have the app listen. I use the listen. Press the sound id button, then press microphone and it start listening. As it hears the birds it will show a picture of the bird and give you the name. As it hears more birds it will list them. When it hears a bird on the list it will highlight that bird. When you end the listening, you can then touch a button near the name of the bird and a drop down menu will come up for you to hear the bird. It is very visually impaired friendly. I use voice over, so if you want to hear the name of the bird while in listening mode, make sure you turn up the volume to high before you start listening. This has become my favorite app. Have fun, stay safe.

**EVER WONDER...**

* Why is it that Doctors call what they do 'practice' ❓❓ 🤷 ‍  ️
* Why is lemon juice made with artificial flavor, and dishwashing liquid made with real lemons ❓❓
* Why is the man who invests all your money called a broker ❓❓ 🤷

**THE PERILS OF CARL LEWIS –** Fixing my house

So, I had a drain pipe deteriorated behind the sink and within the wall. It has been leaking for a long time by the time we found it. Everything seemed to be draining alright and nothing sounded wrong. When you have a leak in a pressure line you can hear, not so with a drain line. So here are a few tips I have learned. First check your insurance. I have learned that a lot of insurance companies will not cover drain issues, rot. Alfa only covers above the sub floor. They also do not cover plumbing, makes no sense to me. You would think they would want to fix the problem from coming back. Now the packing. We used about twenty-five or thirty plastic totes. I should have thought over the packing a little more. Remember to mark what is in the totes. We rented a pod storage container. We have been living in this old house for thirty years, you do not realize how much stuff you have collected till you try and pack it up. We had to remove everything from half of house, so the contractors could remove all of the sub floors and fix the issue. We filled the pod with furniture and some totes and appliances. Then what remained came to other side of the house. before the fun adventure started. I like you, had memorized where most everything was. The remote beside the TV, vitamins on top of refrigerator, pans in this cabinet, glassed in that cabinet. Well that went out the window, had to relearn where everything is. So, if this happens to you, do not pack your patience in any tote, keep a really strong hold on to it, you will need it. This is not a couple of days project it is more like a few weeks. Then we had to pick out new cabinets, new countertop, and new flooring. That is more work than you would think. We drove all over looking at these items and comparing with it with that, making sure we got what we needed. There are so many choices. Then scheduling everything to come together in a timely manner so the contractors are not slowed down. Then give your patience a daily hug, as you listen to them rip the floors apart. But we know in the end it will all be good.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|

|  |
| --- |
| **Assets of the Social Security Trust Fund will be exhausted in 2033, a year earlier than last year’s estimate, according to the annual Social Security Trustees’ Report.**  Benefits payouts for Social Security (OASI) will be limited to 76% of obligations when that happens. When assets are exhausted, benefit payouts will be limited to current income, unless supplemental government appropriations are made. The disability fund (DI) will not see its assets exhausted until 2057, at which point benefits would be cut by 9%. The assets supporting payouts from Medicare part A, the hospital insurance fund (HI), will last until 2026, at which time benefits would also be cut by 9%. Next year’s report will also likely show earlier exhaustion dates, since increases in benefit amounts to compensate for inflation will create a faster payout rate.**To fix Social Security, these proposals have been discussed**:* Cut benefits by raising the retirement age beyond the current age 67, cut benefits for high income recipients, or by not granting full adjustments for inflation.
* Raise taxes. Currently, both employers and employees pay 6.2% of wages and salaries. Increase the taxable maximum. Currently, income above $142,800 is not subject to Social Security tax. Tax fringe benefits which are currently untaxed, such as health insurance benefits to workers.

A calculator laying out how much a fix would cost can be found at the website of the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, [https://www.crfb.org/socialsecurityreformer/](http://r.smartbrief.com/resp/pfekCNazgGDtaiheCigaiuBVYHzy). |

 |

**EVER WONDER...**

* **Why is the time of** **day with the slowest traffic called rush hour** **❓❓** **🤷** **‍**
* **Why isn't there mouse-flavored cat food** **❓❓** **🤷** **‍**  **️**
* **Why didn't Noah swat those two mosquitoes** **❓❓** **🤷** **‍**
* **Why do they sterilize the needle for lethal injections** **❓❓** **🤷** **‍**
* **You know that Indestructible black box that is used on airplanes? Why don't they make the whole plane out of that stuff** **❓❓** **‼** **🤷** **‍**  **️**

**VA and Death Benefits -** Preparing for the passing of a loved one, or even yourself, can be a difficult and confusing time. VA can help you and your survivors prepare for the future. Here’s how VA’s burial and memorial benefits can honor your legacy.

#### **Burial and memorial benefits –** No one wants to leave their family with large burial and funeral expenses. VA’s compassionate and professional memorial and burial services can help ease families through loss and save them thousands of dollars. If you are a Veteran, service member, spouse or dependent, [you may be eligible for burial in a VA national cemetery and other benefits](https://www.va.gov/burials-memorials/eligibility/). These benefits include:

* Access to more than 140 national cemeteries, 95 of which are open to interments of caskets or cremated remains. Specific burial options are limited to those available at a cemetery and will vary based on availability.
* A United States flag, provided at no cost, to drape the casket or accompany the urn of a Veteran who served honorably in the U.S. Armed Forces.
* A single headstone, columbarium niche cover or a flat marker for a Veteran’s final resting place, whether in a private, state or national cemetery.
* A medallion for use on a headstone, or other memorial in a private cemetery, to indicate a deceased person’s Veteran status. Multiple sizes are available, and VA delivers the headstone or marker anywhere in the world at no cost.
* A Presidential Memorial Certificate – an engraved certificate signed by the current president that honors the memory of honorably discharged Veterans – for families of deceased Veterans.

VA also provides burial benefits to partially offset the cost of burial expenses, plot costs and transportation costs for a Veteran’s remains. These benefits are paid at [different rates](https://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/claims-special-burial.asp) based on whether the Veteran’s death was service-connected or non-service connected. More information on burial benefits compensation is available at [VA.gov](https://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/claims-special-burial.asp).  VA will pay the first living person to file a claim as listed below:

1. The Veteran’s surviving spouse, or
2. The survivor of a legal union between the deceased Veteran and the survivor, or
3. The Veteran’s children, regardless of age, or
4. The Veteran’s parents or the surviving parent, or
5. The executor or administrator of the deceased Veteran’s estate, or the person acting for the deceased Veteran’s estate.

#### **How to apply for benefits –** When applying for burial and memorial benefits, there are basic forms that must be completed, including:

* [VA Form 21P-530](https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/vba-21p-530-are.pdf) for burial benefits (must be received within two years of burial or cremation)
* [VA Form 40-1330](https://www.va.gov/vaforms/va/pdf/VA40-1330.pdf) for a headstone, grave marker or niche marker
* [VA Form 40-1330M](https://www.va.gov/vaforms/va/pdf/VA40-1330M.pdf) for a medallion to be placed on a privately purchased headstone or marker
* [VA Form 40-0247](https://www.va.gov/vaforms/va/pdf/VA40-0247.pdf) for a Presidential Memorial Certificate
* [VA Form 27-2008](https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-27-2008-ARE.pdf) for a United States flag for burial purposes

The [VA Survivors and Burial Benefits Kit](https://www.benefits.va.gov/BENEFITS/docs/VASurvivorsKit.pdf) provides instructions on how to apply for each benefit and includes copies of the VA forms needed, so you can familiarize yourself with them now. [Current versions of these forms](http://www.va.gov/vaforms) (and more) are available on VA.gov. The Survivors and Burial Benefits Kit also includes tips on how to fill out applications with examples of completed More resources

Visit VA.gov to learn more about [VA’s burial benefits](https://www.va.gov/burials-memorials/). Information on survivor and burial benefits is available [online](https://www.va.gov/family-member-benefits/) and in the [Summary of VA Dependents’ and Survivors’ Benefits](https://benefits.va.gov/BENEFITS/benefits-summary/SummaryofVADependentsandSurvivorsBenefits.pdf) pamphlet. Other information regarding VA burial benefits such as flags, headstones and markers is provided by VA’s [National Cemetery Administration](https://www.cem.va.gov/burial_benefits/index.asp).

**Important Phone Numbers** – Dorrie Rush, an officer with the nonprofit called Ophthalmic Edge Patients (OE Patients), has compiled a list of helpful phone numbers for popular businesses related to accessibility. Here are some of the phone lines:

* **Amazon’s Accessibility Customer Service** – 888.283.1678. Call to speak with an accessibility specialist who can help you buy books and other products, or get you directly to tech support for Amazon devices and services including Alexa, Kindle & Fire Tablet.
* **Audible (audiobook) Support** – 888.283.5051.
* **Apple Accessibility Support Line** – 877.204.3930 For users of Apple’s iPhone, iPad, iPod Touch, Apple Watch, or a Mac—this is a gift. It is a special support line reserved for customers with vision, hearing, motor, and learning impairments. Senior AppleCare specialists are available 24/7 to help you get your Accessibility Settings right, answer your questions, and resolve your technical issues. They’ll even teach you a thing or two.
* **AT&T National Center for Citizens with Disabilities (NCCD)** – 866.241.6568 This is where wireless customers with vision loss get answers to questions about accessibility features and services available from AT&T.
* **Comcast Accessibility** – 866.668.6703 Direct line to a dedicated team, specially trained to support customers who rely on accessibility services including voice guidance and video description.
* **Verizon Center for Customers with Disabilities** – 800.974.6006 Free info line for your home phone and your mobile phone. Get your bills in the format of your choice—large print or digital. They can help you with anything else pertaining to your home phone service.
* **Verizon Wireless National Accessibility Center** – 888.262.1999 Get answers to questions about enlarging text, using voice commands effectively, or using the screen reader, often remain unanswered when posed to your store representative. Now there is a customer service and technical support center dedicated to helping people maximize the accessibility features built into all of Verizon’s mobile devices.

For the complete article by Dorrie Rush, please visit: <https://ophthalmicedge.org/patient/accessibility-support-phone-lines-youshould-know/>

**DID YOU KNOW**? If you are blind or low vision and need to call someone or a business and don’t know the phone number, call information (411) to get help. Remember you should not be charged for 411 (information) calls. If you are being charged for 411 calls, on your landline or mobile phone, call your carrier for the 411 on how to get free 411 information.

**STORY OF THE HAIRCUT**

Blessed are those that can give without remembering and take without forgetting.

One day a florist went to a barber for a haircut. After the cut, he asked about his bill, and the barber replied, I cannot accept money from you, I’m doing community service this week the florist was pleased and left the shop.

When the barber went to open his shop the next morning, there was a thank you card and a dozen roses waiting for him at his door.

Later, a cop comes in for a haircut, and when he tries to pay his bill, the barber again replied, I cannot accept money from you, I’m doing community service this week. The cop was happy and left the shop.  The next morning when the barber went to open up, there was a thank you card and a dozen donuts waiting for him at his door.

Then a politician came in for a haircut, and when he went to pay his bill, the barber again replied, I cannot accept money from you. I'm doing community service this week. The politician was very happy and left the shop.

The next morning, when the barber went to open up, there were a dozen politicians lined up waiting for a free haircut.   And that, my friends, illustrates the fundamental difference between the citizens of our country and the politicians who run it.

**IN RESPONSE** to the growing number of online fraud reports against the military community, AARP recently launched its [Veterans Fraud Center](https://campaigns.aarp.org/vets-fraud-center/), a new education and resource hub to help protect Veterans, service members and their families.

**The data –** Just last year, an [AARP survey](https://www.aarp.org/research/topics/economics/info-2021/fraud-scams-military-veterans.html?CMP=RDRCT-PRI-FRAUD-110821) found that one in three active-duty military members and Veterans have lost money to at least one fake service-related offer.

Additionally, the number of fraud attacks against the military community jumped 69 percent compared to the previous year, according to the [2021 Consumer Sentinel Network Data Book](https://www.ftc.gov/reports/consumer-sentinel-network-data-book-2021) published by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). Of those 110,827 reports of fraud, 26 percent resulted in financial losses, which totaled $267 million. Individual victims within the military community reported losing more money than their civilian counterparts, with a median loss of $600, compared to $500 for civilians.

“Targeting scams at members of the military community is unconscionable,” said Troy Broussard, senior advisor of AARP’s Veterans and Military Families Initiative and U.S. Army Desert Storm Veteran. “The AARP Veterans Fraud Center is designed to alert Veterans and their families about the latest scams and how to avoid them.”

**AARP’s free resources**

[AARP’s Veterans Fraud Center](https://campaigns.aarp.org/vets-fraud-center) offers free information on the latest scams targeting the military community, tips for spotting other types of consumer fraud, and specially tailored resources to help protect Veterans and military families.

They include:

* The new AARP [“Watchdog Alert Handbook: Veterans Edition,”](https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/home-and-family/voices/veterans/2022/04/watchdog-alert-fraud-handbook-veterans-aarp.pdf) highlighting tips for detecting the most common ways con artists target Veterans and military families.
* The [AARP Fraud Watch Network](https://www.aarp.org/money/scams-fraud/about-fraud-watch-network/) and [Scam-Tracking Map](https://www.aarp.org/money/scams-fraud/tracking-map/).
* [Operation Protect Veterans](https://www.uspis.gov/veterans), a joint program of the AARP Fraud Watch Network and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.
* AARP’s [The Perfect Scam](https://www.aarp.org/podcasts/the-perfect-scam/) podcast, which profiles America’s biggest scams each week, including those targeting Veterans, and AARP’s free Fraud Watch Helpline, at 877-908-3360.

**KICKBALL CHALLENGE** – Recently the LA/MS BVA Regional Group with the help of the East Baton Rouge Lions Club donated a Bronze Braille American Flag to the Louisiana School for the Visually Impaired and we noticed that they needed some sports equipment. The RG decided to purchase some beeping frisbees and a beeping kickball. With the generous help of LA/MS BVA member Gaylen (Gatorbug) Bullion We were able to purchase the equipment and delivered them on the first day of the school’s summer camps. The Coached was very impressed and said that when the weather is a little cooler the kids will challenge the BVA to a game of kickball. We may need help if we accept the challenge to a game. I have problems running to the bathroom let alone running to a beeping base. It definitely will be time for some of our younger members to show off their athletic abilities. The kids took to the beeping ball and beeping frisbees right away, one of the little girls said, “now I can find the frisbee”, we all had smiles and a little tear.

**ONLY IN THIS STUPID WORLD…**

* do we leave cars worth thousands of dollars in the driveway and put our useless junk in the garage. 🤷 ‍
* do drugstores make the sick walk all the way to the back of the Store to get their prescriptions while healthy people can buy cigarettes at the front. 🤷

|  |
| --- |
| **VETERANS EXPOSED TO AGENT ORANGE, RADIATION, TOXIC WATER INCLUDED IN LANDMARK BURN PIT BILL**As reported June 16 by Patricia Kime for Military Times, in addition to improving access to benefits for post-9/11 veterans exposed to burn pits, the sweeping toxic exposure legislation approved 84-14 by the Senate on Thursday will add two new conditions to the Department of Veterans Affairs' list of Agent Orange-related illnesses and expand benefits for veterans sickened by radiation or poisoned water in certain geographic locations. The bill adds hypertension and monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance, or MGUS, to the list of illnesses linked to Agent Orange exposure, allowing affected veterans to apply for healthcare and disability benefits with the VA without having to prove that their condition was caused by their service.  |

|  |
| --- |
| **'Forever Chemicals' Linked to Hundreds of Military Bases Are Unsafe at Any Level, EPA Warns**As reported June 15 by Travis Tritten and Rebecca Kheel for Military Times, the "forever chemicals" that may have contaminated water at hundreds of military installations are more dangerous than previously thought and could be harmful in even minuscule amounts, according to a new warning by the Environmental Protection Agency released Wednesday. The agency issued the new assessment that the chemicals known as PFAS, which were widely used in the military's firefighting foam as well as more broadly for non-stick commercial products, could cause health problems in drinking water at levels "near zero and below EPA's ability to detect at this time."  |

|  |
| --- |
|  |

**THE BEST CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES EVER!** By Kathy Ferro

Makes 12 Large or 36 Small Cookies

INGREDIENTS:

1 ¼ Cups All Purpose Flour

1 Teaspoon Vanilla Extract

½ Teaspoon Baking Soda

1 Egg

4 Oz Dark and Semi-Sweet Chocolate Chunks OR 8-12 Oz Semi-Sweet Chocolate Chips

¾ Cup Brown Sugar, Packed

½ Cup Granulated Sugar

½ Cup Unsalted butter, Melted

1 Teaspoon Salt

PREPERATION:

1. In a large bowl, whisk together the sugars, salt and melted butter until a paste is formed with no lumps.

2. Whisk in the egg and vanilla, beating until light ribbons fall off the whisk and remain for a short period of time before falling back into the mixture.

3. Sift in the flour and baking soda, then fold the mixture with a spatula (Be sure not to over mix or the glutens in the flour will toughen and cause the cookies to become cakier)

4. Fold in the chocolate chip chunks, then chill the dough for at least 30 minutes. For a more intense Toffee like flavor and deeper color, chill the dough overnight. The longer the dough rests, the more complex the flavor will be.

5. Preheat the oven to 350 deg. F, and line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Scoop the dough with an ice cream scoop onto the parchment paper, leaving at least 4 inches of space between the cookies and sides of the baking sheet.

6. Bake for 12 - 15 minutes or until the edges are. Just starting to turn brown. Cool and serve with milk!

**ONLY IN THIS STUPID WORLD…**

* **do people order double cheeseburgers, large fries, and a diet Coke.**  **🤷** **‍**
* **do banks leave vault doors open and then chain the pens to the counters. 🤷**
* **do we buy hot dogs in packages of ten and buns in Packages of eight.** **🤷** **‍**

**NOAA PREDICTS ABOVE NORMAL 2022 HURRICANE SEASON – Are you prepared?**

2022 forecast makes it the seventh straight above-average hurricane season with a range of 14 to 21 named storms, which means storms with winds 39mph or higher and 3 to 6 major hurricanes (category 3, 4, or 5).

Hurricanes are the most powerful weather event on earth and are even faster than a cheetah, the fastest animal on land. They produce winds of 74 miles an hour or more and can cause major damage from storm surge, wind damage, rip currents and flooding. They can happen along any U.S. coast or in any territory in the Atlantic or Pacific oceans. Storm surge historically is the leading cause of hurricane-related deaths in the United States. Early preparation and identification of local support by individuals are key elements for communities to become hurricane resilient.

“Hurricane Ida spanned nine states, demonstrating that anyone can be in the direct path of a hurricane and in danger from the remnants of a storm system,” said FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell. “It’s important for everyone to understand their risk and take proactive steps to get ready now by visiting [www.Ready.gov](http://www.Ready.gov) and [www.Listo.gov](http://www.Listo.gov) for preparedness tips, and by downloading the FEMA App to make sure you are receiving emergency alerts in real-time.”

VA encourages everyone to become hurricane resilient by following the actions below to help you and your family to become better prepare for the next storm.

* Find out if you live in a hurricane evacuation zone.
* Locate the nearest shelter if you need to leave your home.
* Review/update insurance policies.
* Plan to protect your home.
* Create or be familiar with your family plan.
* Stay informed with the latest information.
* Build or replenish your emergency kit with hurricane supplies.

**Evacuation plan**

The first thing you need to do is find out if you live in a hurricane evacuation zone. If you do, now is the time to begin planning where you would go and how you would get there. You do not need to travel hundreds of miles but you should have multiple options. Your destination could be a friend or relative who doesn’t live in an evacuation zone. If you live in a well-built home outside the evacuation zone, your safest place may be to remain in your home. Be sure to account for your pets and adjust the plan based on the latest health and safety guidelines.



Hurricane preparedness checklist

For more information on the hurricane preparedness, please click on the following links below:

[FEMA Hurricane Preparedness](https://www.ready.gov/hurricanes)

[National Weather Service Hurricane Preparedness Page](https://www.weather.gov/wrn/hurricane-preparedness)

[Find Your Evacuation Zone](https://flash.org/pdf/2020_Hurricane_Evacuation_Zones.pdf)

[Assemble Your Supplies](https://www.weather.gov/wrn/2020-hurricane-supplies)

[Get an Insurance Check-up](https://www.weather.gov/wrn/2020-hurricane-insurance)

[Strengthen Your Home](https://www.weather.gov/wrn/2020-hurricane-strengthen-home)

[Help Your Neighbor](https://www.weather.gov/wrn/2020-help-your-neighbor)

[Complete Your Plan](https://www.weather.gov/wrn/2020-hurricane-plan)

[Veterans Assistance](https://www.disasterassistance.gov/information/veterans)

Every year, hurricane season seems to get busier and more powerful than the last. It is up to you to protect yourself, your loved ones and your home by staying informed with the local authorities, and to have an evacuation plan and emergency go kit should you need it in the next storm. Stay safe!

Floods are one of the most common and serious [catastrophes](https://blogs.va.gov/VAntage/?s=disaster) in the United States. They are caused by a variety of factors, including a sudden accumulation of rain, rising rivers, tidal surges, ice jams, rapid snowmelt and dam failures. They can occur within minutes or hours of a heavy rainfall, and waters can rise as high as 30 feet or more. Even small streams and creeks can rise rapidly and cause damage.

Areas that are densely populated are at a higher risk than rural areas. Floods can move homes and cars, uproot trees and destroy bridges. Because they happen with little to no warning, residents in low-lying areas are particularly at risk. According to the American Red Cross, flash floods are the number one weather-related killer in the U.S. Almost half of all flash flood fatalities are vehicle related, according to the National Weather Service. If you’re driving and approach a water-covered road, turn around. Just six inches of water can stall a vehicle, and two feet can float most cars, trucks and SUVs.

Failing to evacuate flooded areas or entering flood waters can lead to injury or death. Know your risk, protect your home, plan your supplies and evacuation route, and keep you and your loved ones safe.



A flood can occur within minutes or hours of a heavy rainfall, and waters can rise as high as 30 feet or more. Are you prepared?

**Before a flood**

* Understand the difference between a flood watch (start preparing) and a flood warning (occurring now).
* Learn about [risks](https://msc.fema.gov/portal/home) in your area. Check with your local government for recommendations.
* [Make a plan](https://www.ready.gov/plan) for your household, including your pets, so that you and your family know what to do, where to go, and how to protect yourselves from flooding. Remember that some evacuation shelters [do not accept pets](https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/petprotect.html).
* [Build a “Go Kit”](https://www.ready.gov/kit) of the supplies you will need if you have to quickly evacuate your home. Don’t forget your rubber boots, sturdy shoes, waterproof gloves and insect repellent , something waterproof to protect your electronics and a heavy duty White Cane or sturdy stick.
* Sign up for your community’s warning system – Emergency Alert System (EAS) and [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)](https://www.noaa.gov/) Weather Radio.
* Learn and practice evacuation routes, shelter plans and flash flood response.
* Purchase or renew a flood insurance policy. Homeowner’s policies do not cover flooding. It typically takes up to 30 days for a policy to go into effect, so the time to buy is well before a disaster. Get flood coverage under the [National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)](https://www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program).
* Keep important documents in a waterproof container. Create password-protected digital copies.
* Protect your property. Move valuables to higher levels. Bring outdoor belongings, such as patio furniture, indoors. Declutter drains and gutters. Install check valves. Consider a sump pump with a battery. Turn off propane tanks to reduce the potential for fire.
* Listen to local area radio, [NOAA radio](http://www.redcrossstore.org/category/id/1) or TV stations for the latest information and updates.
* Fill your car’s gas tank, in case you need to evacuate.

**During a flood**

While a flood warning is in effect, it is essential to follow your plan and not react impulsively. Remain in an elevated dry safe place for the entirety of the flood. If possible, do not attempt to walk or drive. If you must walk, make sure the water level is less than six inches and, if you must drive, make sure it is less than two feet. Follow these [basic tips](https://www.ready.gov/floods) and be sure to wash yourself if you come into contact with flood water as it could be contaminated.

**After flood**

Once the flood has passed it is important to resolve any issues as quickly and efficiently as possible. Do not attempt to move or return home until the roads have been declared safe by the authorities. Continue to boil drinking water before consumption until the authorities declare it safe. Document and photograph any damage and contact your insurance provider.

  **️**

**BIBLE PASSAGE –** Matthew chapter 15:13, Jesus speaks to his disciples about the Pharisees and he says that the blind leading the blind will fall into the pit (some versions have ditch), I am sorry Lord, but the 2022 well trained blind veteran will not only find the pit or ditch, but will call upon their friends and either fill it in or build a bridge over it and landscape around the hole so the sighted won’t fall in as they are walking along looking at their phone. The blind have come a long way in 2,000 years.

**VETERANS CRISIS LINE CONFIDENTIAL HELP FOR VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES**

Veterans and their loved ones can receive free, confidential support 24 hours a day every day of the year by the following ways:

* Call 1-800-273-8255 and press 1
* Chat online at [www.VeteransCrisisLine.net](http://www.veteranscrisisline.net/)
* Send a text message to 838255
* Ask Siri or Google to dial the Crisis Hotline for you on smartphones.

This service is for Veterans and their loved ones even if they are not registered with the Department of Veterans Affairs or VA health care.

# **SHAWNTINA GIBSON’S ADVENTURES –** I’m on my way to my first **sports adapted clinic** and I can’t imagine how I’m going to handle this challenge. Just getting here definitely eased my mind, I was lucky enough to have an excellent plane ride with no complications, which is rare nowadays lol.

Meeting my fellow blinded veteran ladies for the first time was a great experience. We all immediately shared life stories which connected us to each other in many different ways. The first day Monday, June 20, we kicked off our week with mountain bike adaptive riding. This consisted of us learning the tools, techniques, and proper way of riding with a guide. We started off at the house learning all equipment, and the proper way to put on our gear, eventually branching out into the city of Crestview with a short ride. We broke for lunch and started back up in the afternoon with a small ride up the mountains in Crestview. This was excellent for us all getting adapted and getting use to not only the altitude, but riding properly in the gravel and going up and down hills. I’m definitely looking forward to the rest of the week to see how this experience goes, especially tomorrow riding all day in the mountains. This experience along with being here with like peers and even the volunteers made this beyond excellent. Thank you was not enough for how my heart felt just enjoying this day and experience.

Day 2, June 21, was more than I could ever imagine! Each morning as we would start off the day, we would set a goal of what we would like to accomplish within ourselves. Day two, my goal was to actually ride up front on the tandem bike. It was a goal but to be honest, realistically I didn’t think I was going to accomplish my goal. We did a 13-mile bike ride through the mountains of Crestview. Beautiful views were enjoyed all along the way. It was challenging to reign in between going up and down. But before the end of the day, I not only accomplished my goal but, I was able to lead the tandem bike for about four blocks prior to returning back to the house and changing into the loungewear and joining my fellow vets. What an adrenaline rush inside my heart. My hands and legs were shaking with so much excitement as I was leading this bike. As a blind veteran accomplishing something that I really thought was going to be an unrealistic goal for myself. Day two was probably the most highlighting experience of this trip for me.

Day three, June 22, was another challenging day for me, rock climbing! I have never been out to the desert or the mountains and left alone. Here I am strapped to rock climbing equipment 20 feet up. I didn’t really have a goal because I didn’t know how to feel about the situation with the spectrum rock climb. I climbed all four walls that the adaptive sports team had set up for us, each had a different section of the mountain some more difficult than others.

Day four, Thursday, June 23, was a relaxing water day for us. The weather started off very cold and rainy. We were unsure even if we were going to get the experience of the water. But we conquered and got a chance to enjoy ourselves canoeing, kayaking, and pedal boating. Again, a new experience, not letting the fact that I was cold and freezing by then, I pushed through and enjoyed each activity at a time. We also got the pleasure of hiking up to find this beautiful waterfall. The walk was very tiresome and exhausting for us all after being in the lake, but we pushed through and the waterfall was beyond worth it. What a beautiful site to capture. On arriving, we heard the water fall down the stream. We all got a chance to just sit and meditate and reflect on life while into this beautiful scenery.

Day five, June 24, was a hiking day. We got to ride the ski lift up 2000 feet and hiked an extra 650 feet which put us at an elevation of 11,450 feet. Once we made it to the top of the trail we hiked back down and then broke for a lunch. After lunch we rode the ski lift again another thousand feet up, and hiked back down. This was our final long exhausting day.

It was a great to reflect back on the whole week. Each day let us release all negative things within ourselves and embrace positiveness around us. At least for me, it was hiking down when I felt like I found myself all over again.

Once again, I would like to thank the BVA and the sports adaptive team from Crestview for giving me this wonderful experience. I definitely challenge myself in ways I never thought imagined, even creating a new part of me.

**EVER WONDER...**

* **Why don't sheep shrink when it rains** **❓❓** **🤷** **‍**
* **Why are they called apartments when they are all stuck together?** **❓** **🤷** **‍**
* **If flying is so Safe, why do they call the airport the terminal** **❓❓** **🤷** **‍**  **️**
* **I like this one!!!** **If con is the opposite of Pro, is Congress the opposite of progress** **❓❓** **🤷** **‍**

**DISCLAIMER**

The V.A., BVA, CIA, FBI nor any other reputable organization is responsible for the contents of this so-called Newsletter. I apologize to all those who I have copied, paraphrased, plagiarized or stolen from to patch together these articles. Last chance for any legal action contact el Jefe, The Sultan of Mississippi, The Shah of Biloxi President Tracy Ferro. For those who are not in the know or have been under a rock since the last meeting, we now have a much younger, better looking, more shapely and smarter President Raquel Welch. For those old guys out there, this is not the same Raquel as the one in 1,000,000 BC, which came out in 1967, she is the 2022 BVA version, the poster would look the same!!

Thank you,

Gary Schoelerman Secretary, Louisiana/Mississippi BVA Regional Group, Inc.

Phone: 337-332-5505; Cell: 337-781-2797; Email: gschoelerman@gmail.com

**IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS**

Gulf coast Veterans HCS Operator, Biloxi…………………………………….. (228) 523-5000

G.V. Sonny Montgomery HCS Operato, Jackson……………………………. (601) 362-4471

South East Louisiana HCS Operator, New Orleans…………………………. (800) 935-8387

Alexandria HCS Operator, Alexandria…………………………………………. (800) 375-8387

Shreveport HCS Operator, Shreveport………………………………………... (318) 221-8411

Robin Sniffen, Biloxi VIST………………………………………………………. (228) 385-6762

Melanie Sheardon, Jackson VIST……………………………………………… (601) 364-7937

Darla Pascal, New Orleans VIST………………………………………………. (800) 935-8387, 66387

John Majkut, Alexandria VIST………………………………………………….. (318) 592-5529

Broderick Burkes, Shreveport VIST……………………………………………. (318) 990-4839

VA Emergency Room Visit - Within 72 Hours………………………………… (844) 724-7842)

VA Central Office Operator………………………………………………………(800) 827-1000

VA Cemetery Services…………………………………………………………... (800) 535-1117

BVA Headquarters……………………………………………………………….. (800) 669-7079

**CHECK OUT THE ATTACHED AD THAT THE LA / MS REGIONAL GROUP SENT TO HEADQUARTERSFOR THE CONVENTION PROGRAM.** Hope to see you at the convention!