BLINDED VETERANS ASSOCIATION

79th National Convention
July 7-10, 2024
Hyatt Regency Riverfront
Jacksonville, FL
Thank You to Our Corporate Partners

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WAYMO

3 Star Sponsors ★★★

dot ORCAM Oracle Health Sciences

VANDA Pharmaceuticals Inc. Vispero

2 Star Sponsors ★★

Bosma Navigating Blindness

1 Star Sponsors ★

American Academy of Ophthalmology WayAround
July 5, 2024

Dear BVA 79th National Convention Attendees:

As the National President of the Blinded Veterans Association (BVA), please allow me to be among the first to welcome you to Jacksonville and a historic 79th National Convention! We are pleased to be partnering and sharing this unique gathering with our friends at American Council of the Blind (ACB) and offer special thanks to our generous corporate sponsors and exhibitors.

Reflecting on the proud history of our organization, we take immense pride in the remarkable achievements of the past 79 years. From humble beginnings, our organization has grown to become a leading advocate for blind and low vision veterans and their caregivers, tirelessly working towards the empowerment, rehabilitation, and overall well-being of this special population of men and women who faithfully served our country and sacrificed so much of themselves.

As we mark this milestone, let us acknowledge the significance of our congressional charter that allowed me to deliver orally and submit our annual testimony in print this past March. Over the years, the charter has allowed BVA to contribute to advancements made in visual impairment and rehabilitation. From progress in assistive technology to breakthrough medical treatments and the VA Visual Impairment Services Teams that serve us, these improbable accomplishments remind us of the positive impact we can make when we come together.

A primary objective of our national convention is to foster a sense of camaraderie among blind and now low vision veterans. I hope we can utilize our experience here to connect, share experiences, and establish lasting friendships. We can also take this a step further this year as we collaborate and partner with ACB, sharing and expanding our own awareness of resources and experiences.

Let the 79th National Convention begin! Let us use this marvelous event as a springboard in further honoring the courage of those who have gone before us, sharing the knowledge we have gained, and forging a path toward a brighter future.

Sincerely,

Paul Mimms
BVA National President
2024 Schedule of Events Overview

WayAround

WayAround is providing accessible descriptions of the hotel and convention center. Scan a WaySign (located underneath ADA signs) with your iPhone or Android device to access an accessible directory of all the spaces used for the Convention at the hotel. Be sure to download the free WayAround app for iOS, Android, or BlindShell Classic 2 to access the accessible descriptions. The Blinded Veterans Association would like to recognize WayAround as a Corporate Partner.

Nurse’s Station

A nurse’s station will be open on Monday, July 8 and Tuesday, July 9 from 8:00am-5:00pm in the Client Office 1 room. Only veterans are eligible for treatment. Thank you to the North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System’s Promotion/Disease Prevention Program for providing this service.

Bow Wow Lounge

Back by “pupular” demand the Bow Wow Lounge, courtesy of Waymo, is available as a respite area for attending guide/service dogs. The Lounge is located in the Acosta room and will have access to relief areas. Please ensure to adhere to the Bow Wow Lounge rules that are posted in the room.

Assistance with Claims

Accredited BVA National Service Officers will be available from July 7-9 (Sunday through Tuesday) in Client Office 2 to address issues and questions about VA claims. Office hours will be 8:30am-5:00pm. Please stop by and greet National Service Officers Duayne Driscoll, Marlene Davis-Lilly, and Scott Quinlan.

Hotel Emergency

In case of a fire alarm or other emergency, the hotel’s public address system will provide instructions. Please use the stairs or gather at your floor’s designated location for rescue. Do not use the elevators!
2024 Schedule of Events  *Subject to change
Hyatt Regency Riverfront • Jacksonville, FL

Sunday, July 7

8:30am-5:00pm – BVA VSP Office

________________________

Client Office 2

8:00am-5:00pm – BVA Registration Open

________________________

Daytona

9:00am-5:00pm – Bow Wow Lounge *(Sponsored by Waymo)*

___________ Acosta

9:00am-5:00pm – Exhibit Hall Open

________________________

Conference Center A/B

7:00pm-8:00pm – 79th National Convention
Joint Opening Ceremony *(BVA/ACB)*

______ Grand Ballroom

Monday, July 8

8:00am-9:00am – BVA Registration Open

________________________

Daytona

8:30am-5:00pm – BVA VSP Office

________________________

Client Office 2

9:00am-5:00pm – Bow Wow Lounge *(Sponsored by Waymo)*

___________ Acosta

9:00am-11:30am – BVA Opening Business Meeting

___________ River Terrace 2

9:00am-11:30am – BVA Auxiliary Opening Business Meeting

_______ City Terrace 8

11:00am-5:00pm – Exhibit Hall Open

________________________

Conference Center A/B

1:00pm-3:00pm – Bylaws and Resolutions Meeting

___________ River Terrace 2

1:00pm-3:00pm – BVA Auxiliary Committee Meetings

___________ City Terrace 8

3:00pm-3:15pm – Break

3:15pm-4:15pm – Fireside Chat

________________________

River Terrace 2

4:15pm-5:00pm – Break
Monday, July 8 (continued)  
__________________________  ROOM  
5:00pm-6:00pm – BVA Gala Happy Hour __________________River Terrace 3  
6:00pm-9:00pm – BVA Gala Reception __________________River Terrace 1  
  **Keynote Speaker:** Major General Patrick Sargent, USA, (RET)  
  **FACHE, Senior Vice President and General Manager**  
  **Oracle Health Government Services**

Tuesday, July 9  
__________________________  ROOM  
7:30am-8:45am – BVA Ambassador Breakfast ________________River Terrace 1  
  *(Sponsored by OrCam Technologies)*  
8:30am-5:00pm – BVA VSP Office ____________________________Client Office 2  
9:00am-5:00pm – Bow Wow Lounge *(Sponsored by Waymo)________ Acosta  
9:00am-10:00am – BVA Auxiliary New Business Meeting_______City Terrace 8  
9:00am-10:00am – BVA Board of Directors’  
  Membership Open Forum____________________________River Terrace 2  
10:15am-11:30am – Team BVA Outreach Teams Panel _________River Terrace 2  
11:00am-5:00pm – Exhibit Hall Open ____________Conference Center A/B  
12:00pm-2:00pm – Father Carroll Luncheon  
  and Awards Ceremony __________________________River Terrace 1  
  *(Sponsored by Dot, Inc.)*  
  **Keynote Speaker:** Corporal Matthew R. Bradford, USMC (RET)  
2:00pm-3:00pm – Break  
3:00pm-6:00pm – BVA Closing Business Meeting _____________River Terrace 2  
3:00pm-6:00pm – **BVA Auxiliary Speaker:** ____________________City Terrace 8  
  Barbara Webb, *Dole Caregiver Fellow,*  
  *Elizabeth Dole Foundation, Caring for Military Families*  
  Tricky Tray Winners Announced  
6:00pm-7:00pm – Break  
7:00pm-TBD – Florida Regional Group  
  50th Anniversary Celebration __________________River Terrace  
  *(All BVA Members Invited)*
Wednesday, July 10

8:00am-10:00am – BVA/BVA Auxiliary  
National Board of Directors Breakfast/Business Meeting  
(Closed Session)

9:00am-1:00pm – Exhibit Hall Open

Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront
BVA National Officers, Staff, and Geographical Divisions

2023-2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS
National President – Paul L. Mimms
National Vice President – Wade Davis
National Secretary – Tracy Ferro
National Treasurer – Joseph “Joe” Bogart
Director District 1 – Claudia Baldwin
Director District 2 – Joe Link
Director District 3 – Douglas Ingram
Director District 4 – Randall “Randy” Lee Cantrell
National Chaplain – Vacant
Judge Advocate – Stephen Butler
Sergeant-at-Arms – Brian O’Connell
Immediate Past President – Joseph D. McNeil, Sr.
Ombudsman – Tonora Lyn Shannon

NATIONAL OFFICE STAFF
National Executive Director: Donald, D. Overton, Jr.
National Development Director: Meredith Buono-DaGrossa
National Membership Coordinator: Teresa Galgano
Deputy National Legislative Director: Alek Libbin
National Database Administrator: Andrea Malmer
National Communications Coordinator: Stuart Nelson
National Marketing Strategist: Kylie FitzGerald
National Communications Strategist: Steve Baskis
National Service Director: Duayne Driscoll
Deputy National Service Director: Marlene Davis-Lilly
National Service Officer: Scott Quinlan
National Program Coordinator: Vernon F. Humphrey, PhD
Webmaster: Jordan Chesley
DISTRICTS AND REGIONAL GROUPS

District 1 – Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia

District 2 – Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Wisconsin

District 3 – Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Puerto Rico

District 4 – California, Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, Utah, Washington

Florida Theatre
Past Award Recipients

MELVIN J. MAAS AWARD FOR PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

The Major General Melvin J. Maas Award, the highest honor bestowed by BVA, recognizes and honors annually a blind or low vision veteran who has attained a high level of proficiency in adjusting to life with sight loss, and who has achieved a high level of professional success and accomplishment in a chosen career field.

2024 – To Be Announced
2023 – Dr. Vaneada “Vee” Harvey
2022 – Dr. Thomas Zampieri
2021 – No Award Given
2020 – Thomas Miller
2019 – Dr. Norman Jones
2018 – John Linder
2017 – Kennan Horn
2016 – Guadalupe (Walley) Guerra
2015 – James Hogan
2014 – Paul Mimms
2013 – Joe Parker
2012 – Thomas Hicks
2011 – Dan Standage
2010 – Dr. L. Eugene Apple
2009 – Roy Kekahuna
2008 – Roy Young
2007 – Peter Link
2006 – Randy Greene
2005 – George Brummell
2004 – Robert “Dale” Stamper
2003 – Dr. Sidney Ordway
2002 – Wilbert Vandenberg
2001 – Vito DeSantis
2000 – Clifford Philips
1999 – Mike Lewis
1998 – Dave Szumowski
1997 – Elizabeth Carr
1996 – Michael Burton
1995 – Ernie Flynn
1994 – William Fullerton
1993 – Carl Kirksey
1992 – Stephen Maquire
1991 – Don Garner
1990 – J. Dennis Cadigan
1989 – Buddy Spivey
1988 – Robert Bottenberg
1987 – Joe Burns
1986 – Clayton Simons, Sr.
1985 – William Thompson
1984 – Ellsworth Sharpe
1982 – Jerry Monroe
1981 – George Stafford
1980 – Dennis Wyant
1979 – George Gillispie
1978 – Charles Boswell
1977 – Irvin Schloss
1976 – E. Sid Allen
1975 – Michael Johnson
1974 – Salvatore D’Amico
1973 – John Amaniera, Jr.
1972 – Michael Naranjo, Jr.
1971 – Thomas Dargie
1970 – Donald Wedewer
1969 – Dr. George Stocking
1968 – Paul Dule
1967 – Richard Nooe
1966 – Orlando Milano
1965 – Thomas Hasbrook
1964 – John E. Hodgin
1963 – Rob Crowley Riley
1962 – H. Smith Shumway
Melvin J. Maas Award for Professional Achievement (continued)

1961 – Hez Bussey
1960 – Walter Stromer
1959 – Thomas Kennedy, Jr.
1958 – Vincent Lopez
1957 – Welker Shue
1956 – James Womack
1955 – Criss Cole
1954 – Charles Cole

1953 – Russell Williams
1952 – Jesse Castillo
1951 – Hilliard Kirby
1950 – Paul Grant
1949 – Orlando Milano
1948 – Thomas Atkeson
1947 – Leonard Shelhamer

IRVING DIENER AWARD

The Irving Diener Award, established in 1961 recognizes and honors annually the BVA member with the most outstanding contribution to the growth and development of their regional group apart from personal achievements or endeavors.

2024 – To Be Announced
2023 – Gary Schoelerman
2022 – Michaun Harrison
2021 – No Award Given
2020 – Tracy Ferro
2019 – Elizabeth Holmes
2018 – Floyd Everett
2017 – Leonard Pope
2016 – Ruben Sanchez-Burgos
2015 – Ruth Klein
2014 – Charles Register
2013 – No Nominees
2012 – Randall Durrigan
2011 – No Nominees
2010 – Dennis O’Connell
2009 – Bill Case
2008 – Roy Young
2007 – No Nominees
2006 – Don Haynes
2005 – Gene Lowery
2004 – Terry King
2003 – Eldon Pugh
2002 – Jimmy Hutcherson
2001 – Harold Powell
2000 – Mark Cornell
1999 – Larry Grant
1997 – Gerald McDonnell
1996 – Frank Scarcella
1995 – C. Caroline Maas
1994 – Cornelius Appleby
1993 – Larry Belote
1992 – Bryan Burnett
1991 – Russell Gage
1990 – Elizabeth Carr
1989 – Bobby Ridener
1988 – Urban Miyares
1987 – Troy McKenzie
1986 – No Award Given
1985 – David Szumowski
1984 – Rev. Jack Kinley
1983 – Harry Quiles
1982 – Dr. Ronald Miller
1981 – John Fales, Jr.
1980 – Henry Berube
1979 – Walter Powell

continued
Irving Diener Award (continued)

1977 – Dr. George Stocking 1968 – Leonard Shelhammer
1975 – Frank Yagel, Jr. 1966 – Simon Gerbush
1972 – Harrison Gilpin 1963 – George Gilespie
1970 – Clyde Waugh

DAVID L. SCHNAIR AWARD

The David L. Schnair Award recognizes and honors the outstanding contributions of committed volunteers. BVA established this award in 1994 in memory and in honor of World War II veteran David L. Schnair, a BVA Board Member and a BVA Volunteer for nearly five decades.

2024 – To Be Announced 2012 – Enrique Sanchez
2023 – Tracy Ferro 2011 – Ronald Morales
2022 – Marlene Davis-Lilly 2010 – Robert Keller, Sr.
2021 – No Award Given 2009 – Ron Lester
2020 – Dennis Curry 2008 – Hazel Powell
2019 – Johnnie Busch, Sr. 2007 – Jack Shapiro
2018 – Anthony Ricci 2006 – Frank Armstrong
2017 – Dennis O’Connell 2005 – David T. May
2016 – Betty Charlesworth 2004 – Paul Kaminsky
2014 – Charles Davis 2002 – Rochelle Gurgl
2013 – Carl Hytinen 2001 – Corwin Mathews
**GAVEL AWARDS**

The Gold Gavel Award is presented to the regional group which achieves the largest numerical increase in membership during the past year.

The Silver Gavel Award is presented to the regional group which achieves the largest percentage increase in membership during the past year.

The Bronze Award is presented to the individual recruiter of the year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>GOLD</th>
<th>SILVER</th>
<th>BRONZE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2024</td>
<td>To Be Announced</td>
<td>To Be Announced</td>
<td>To Be Announced</td>
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<tr>
<td>2023</td>
<td>Louisiana/Mississippi</td>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>No Award Given</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>Louisiana/Mississippi</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>No Award Given</td>
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<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>No Award Given</td>
<td>No Award Given</td>
<td>No Award Given</td>
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<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>No Award Given</td>
<td>No Award Given</td>
<td>No Award Given</td>
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<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Heartland</td>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>No Award Given</td>
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<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>White River Junction</td>
<td>Florida</td>
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<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Rocky Mountain</td>
<td>Emerald Coast</td>
<td>Florida</td>
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<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>Emerald Coast</td>
<td>Florida</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>Minnesota</td>
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<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Washington State</td>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>Florida</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Southern California</td>
<td>Rio Grande</td>
<td>Florida</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**BVA National Convention Host Cities and Hotels**

July 7-10, 2024  Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront, Jacksonville, FL
August 14-18, 2023  Marriott St. Louis Grand, St. Louis, MO
August 22-26, 2022  Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill, Washington, DC
August 16-20, 2021  Virtual Educational and Business Sessions
August 10, 12, 18-20, 2020  Virtual Educational and Business Sessions
August 12-16, 2019  Marriott Tulsa Hotel Southern Hills, Tulsa, OK
August 13-17, 2018  Nugget Casino Resort, Reno, NV
August 14-18, 2017  Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront, Jacksonville, FL
August 22-26, 2016  Hilton Milwaukee City Center, Milwaukee, WI
August 18-21, 2015  Louisville Marriot Downtown, Louisville, KY
August 18-21, 2014  Nugget, Sparks, NV
August 20-23, 2013  Red Lion Hotel at the Park, Spokane, WA
August 20-23, 2012  San Luis Resort, Galveston Island, TX
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Host City</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 16-20, 2011</td>
<td>Golden Nugget Hotel</td>
<td>Las Vegas, NV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 25-28, 2010</td>
<td>Marriott Crystal Gateway</td>
<td>Arlington, VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 18-22, 2009</td>
<td>DoubleTree Hotel</td>
<td>Portland, OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 14-18, 2008</td>
<td>Hyatt Regency</td>
<td>Phoenix, AZ</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 14-18, 2007</td>
<td>Hyatt Albuquerque</td>
<td>Albuquerque, NM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 15-19, 2006</td>
<td>Adams Mark Hotel</td>
<td>Buffalo, NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 16-20, 2005</td>
<td>Wyndham Miami Beach Resort</td>
<td>Miami Beach, FL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 10-14, 2004</td>
<td>Reno Hilton Hotel</td>
<td>Reno, NV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 26-30, 2003</td>
<td>Hilton Myrtle Beach Resort</td>
<td>Myrtle Beach, SC</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 13-17, 2002</td>
<td>St. Anthony Wyndham Hotel</td>
<td>San Antonio, TX</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug-Sept 28-01, 2001</td>
<td>Riviera Hotel and Casino</td>
<td>Las Vegas, NV</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 15-19, 2000</td>
<td>Radisson Resort Knott’s Berry Farm</td>
<td>Anaheim, CA</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 17-21, 1999</td>
<td>San Juan Grand Beach Resort</td>
<td>San Juan, PR</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 11-15, 1998</td>
<td>Wyndham Northwest Hotel</td>
<td>Chicago, IL</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 19-23, 1997</td>
<td>Sands Regency Hotel</td>
<td>Reno, NV</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 12-17, 1996</td>
<td>Hotel Monteleone</td>
<td>New Orleans, LA</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 21-26, 1995</td>
<td>Stouffers Renaissance</td>
<td>Arlington, VA</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 23-27, 1994</td>
<td>Omni Netherlands</td>
<td>Cincinnati, OH</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 10-14, 1993</td>
<td>Holiday Inn</td>
<td>Tucson, AZ</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 11-15, 1992</td>
<td>Loewes Vanderbilt Plaza</td>
<td>Nashville, TN</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 20-24, 1991</td>
<td>Sands Regency Hotel</td>
<td>Reno, NV</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 01-11, 1990</td>
<td>Kennedy Plaza</td>
<td>Providence, RI</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 15-19, 1989</td>
<td>Radisson Hotel</td>
<td>Denver, CO</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 09-13, 1988</td>
<td>Omni San Diego</td>
<td>San Diego, CA</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 11-15, 1987</td>
<td>Omni International Hotel</td>
<td>Orlando, FL</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 10-14, 1986</td>
<td>Caribe Hilton</td>
<td>San Juan, PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 13-17, 1985</td>
<td>Holiday Inn</td>
<td>San Francisco, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 07-11, 1984</td>
<td>Radisson-Plaza</td>
<td>Nashville, TN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 26-30, 1983</td>
<td>Deaville Hotel</td>
<td>Atlantic City, NJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 10-14, 1982</td>
<td>International Hotel</td>
<td>New Orleans, LA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 11-15, 1981</td>
<td>Stauffer’s Hotel</td>
<td>Washington, DC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 12-16, 1980</td>
<td>Sheraton Park Plaza</td>
<td>New Haven, CT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 07-11, 1979</td>
<td>Wilshire Hyatt Hotel</td>
<td>Los Angeles, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 08-12, 1978</td>
<td>International Hotel</td>
<td>New Orleans, LA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BVA National Convention Host Cities and Hotels (continued)

July 26-30, 1977  Stauffer’s Hotel, Washington, DC
August 24-28, 1976  Ben Franklin Hotel, Philadelphia, PA
August 12-16, 1975  Statler-Hilton Hotel, New York, NY
August 06-10, 1974  Holiday Inn Hotel, Denver, CO
August 14-18, 1973  Dennis Hotel, Atlantic City, NJ
July 19-22, 1972  Roosevelt Hotel, Hollywood, CA
August 04-08, 1971  Playboy Plaza Hotel, Miami Beach, FL
August 06-09, 1969  Warwick Hotel, Philadelphia, PA
July 24-27, 1968  Jack Tar Hotel, San Francisco, CA
August 01-05, 1967  Hotel America, Hartford, CT
August 16-20, 1966  Deaville Hotel, Miami Beach, FL
July 12-17, 1965  Statler-Hilton Hotel, New York, NY
August 05-08, 1964  Granada, San Antonio, TX
August 06-10, 1963  Deshler-Hilton Hotel, Columbus, OH
August 07-11, 1962  The Warwick Hotel, Philadelphia, PA
July 18-22, 1961  Roosevelt Hotel, Hollywood, CA
August 03-06, 1960  Somerset Hotel, Boston, MA
August 04-09, 1959  Carillon Hotel, Miami Beach, FL
July 16-19, 1958  Hotel Ben Franklin, Seattle, WA
August 21-24, 1957  Hotel Statler, Hartford, CT
August 01-04, 1956  Hotel Schroeder, Milwaukee, WI
August 02-06, 1955  Hotel New York, New York, NY
August 18-21, 1954  Commodore Perry Hotel, Toledo, OH
August 19-22, 1953  Penn-Sheraton Hotel, Philadelphia, PA
August 13-16, 1952  Palace Hotel, San Francisco, CA
August 08-11, 1951  Copley Plaza Hotel, Boston, MA
August 23-26, 1950  Hotel Severn, Indianapolis, IN
September 07-10, 1949  Hotel Washington, Washington, DC
September 02-05, 1948  Roosevelt Hotel, Hollywood, CA
September 05-07, 1947  Continental Hotel, Chicago, IL
September 20-22, 1946  Lincoln Hotel, New York, NY
Out and About in Jacksonville

Welcome to the Blinded Veterans Association’s 79th National Convention in Jacksonville, Florida. The city’s Convention and Visitor’s bureau, known officially as Visit Jacksonville, claims that if Jacksonville were to be summed up briefly, it would be a boiled peanut, a secret recipe, an unexpected delight, or a place with a reason to pause rather than to merely pass through.

“We’re a little bit country, and a whole lot of rock n’ roll (southern rock n’ roll, that is),” the Visit Jacksonville description continues.

Jacksonville has a rich history dating back over 6,000 years. The area was originally inhabited by the Timucua people before being colonized by the Spanish in the 16th century. In 1822, Jacksonville became part of the United States when Florida was acquired from Spain. During the Civil War, Jacksonville played a significant role as a supply center for Confederate troops. After the war, it became a major port for shipping lumber and other goods. The city grew rapidly during this time and became an important center for industry and commerce.

In addition to its economic growth, Jacksonville also played a significant role in civil rights history. In 1960, Ax Handle Saturday occurred in downtown Jacksonville where white segregationists attacked African American protesters advocating for equal rights at lunch counters.

Jacksonville has also played a significant role as a major port for the United States Navy. Today, it is home to multiple naval bases and provides vital logistical support to Navy operations in the Atlantic because of Jacksonville’s unique geographical location. The city’s strategic location on the St. Johns River made it an ideal choice for the same military operations during World War II and beyond. The Navy’s presence in the city has profoundly impacted the local economy, with many businesses providing goods and services to support military personnel and their families.

Jacksonville is known for its museums, art galleries, professional sports, and lively music festivals. The city’s extensive park system, including the stunning Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve, presents BVA convention attendees with ample recreational and exploration opportunities.
Downtown Jacksonville boasts 5.6 miles of beautiful riverfront, including almost three miles of riverwalk, perfect for a stroll or a jog by the St. Johns River or a stop at the iconic Friendship Fountain, pictured at right.

The city’s outskirts also offer 22 miles of beautiful beaches with year-round sunshine and numerous waterways. The Jacksonville Shrimp, the Triple-A affiliate of the Miami Marlins, have a noteworthy presence in the city but are unfortunately on the road for the duration of the convention week, and the Jacksonville Jaguars begin training camp just a couple of weeks after the convention.

Now a thriving metropolis with more than a million citizens, Jacksonville boasts the largest municipal population among Florida cities thanks in part to its consolidated city-county government structure which combines municipal and county governments into one entity.

Downtown museums include the Ritz Theatre & Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art Jacksonville, and the Museum of Science and History. Other attractions to visit include Sweet Pete’s, a local candy factory with free tours. Visit the Jacksonville Public Library and do not miss the Imagination Squared Exhibit or the outdoor courtyard! You can get out on the water on one of the many tours offered by St. Johns River Taxi and Tours.

Stop in at one of three Visitor Centers to secure advice from a local expert or obtain information on downtown walking/talking tours. One exists at the Jacksonville International Airport that can be visited upon landing with a little extra time on hand. Another is found on North Laura Street in the heart of the city, and a third is located at the Beaches Museum and History Park, stop in to say hello and learn more about things to do in the area from a local expert. Grab some information on downtown walking and talking tours.

There are many ways to get around the heart of downtown. The Skyway, for example, connects downtown’s Southbank to its Northbank in fewer than five minutes for free. You can also enjoy incredible views and move between downtown points of interest on the water taxi. To help you find your way, Downtown Ambassadors are always nearby ready to give directions and suggestions to visitors. They can be spotted by their bright orange shirts. Go Tuk’n partners with the Jacksonville Transportation Authority to offer pay-to-ride shuttle service in
downtown Jacksonville. To view the stops, download the Tuk’n Ride app from the Google Play and Apple app stores.

Visit Jacksonville offers a wealth of additional resources and tips for enjoying your stay in this historic city. Do not hesitate to refer to it here throughout the convention week.

### Restaurants within a 5-minute walking distance:

- Shor Seafood Grill, inside the Hyatt Regency – melting pot of southern, creole, and Floridian flavors (breakfast, lunch, dinner)
- Morton’s, The Steakhouse, inside the Hyatt Regency – prime aged beef and seafood
- SHOR2Go, inside the Hyatt Regency – pickup or delivery
- TAVERN, inside the Hyatt Regency – signature cocktails, craft beers, or wine with appetizers and grill items
- River Breeze Pool Bar – cocktails, beer, wine, and non-alcoholic drinks
- Market, inside the Hyatt Regency – steady rotation of fresh pastries, sandwiches, and flatbreads, as well as freshly brewed Starbucks coffee (open 24/7)
- D&G Deli and Grill, 223 East Bay Street – fresh salads, sandwiches, and grill items
- Bay Street Bar and Grill, 119 East Bay Street – pizza, burgers, sandwiches, salads
- Cowford Chophouse, 101 East Bay Street – steaks, seafood, cocktails, and rooftop views
- Casa Dora Italian Café, 108 East Forsyth Street – large menu of Italian recipes and pizza
- Dos Gatos, 123 East Forsyth Street – handcrafted cocktails
- Ruth’s Chris Steakhouse, 1201 Riverplace Boulevard inside Crown Plaza Hotel – USDA prime beef
Out and About in Jacksonville (continued)

• Super Food and Brew, 11 East Forsyth Street – fresh sandwiches, salads, bowls, and entrees.

• Indochine, 21 East Adams Street, Suite 200 – Thai food and pho

• Burrito Gallery Downtown, 21 East Adams Street – flavors from down south and south of the border labeled Jax Mex.

• BB’s Restaurant, 1019 Hendricks Avenue – buzzing bistro serving innovative New American dishes and sweets from a dessert case amid “chic digs,” BB’s management asserts.

• Bread and Board, 100 West Bay Street – gourmet sandwiches and sandwich boards, entrees, fresh salads and soups, daily crew Specials, and brunch Saturdays and Sundays, craft beer.

• Sweet Pete’s, 400 North Hogan Street – famous for candy but also offers weekday classic American food specials, weekend brunch, and candy cocktails

• Estrella Cocina, 100 West Bay Street, Suite 701 – rooftop restaurant offering lively flavors of Mexican and coastal dishes

• Bellwether, 117 West Forsyth Street, Suite 100 – elevated southern classics
EXHIBIT HALL HOURS

Saturday, July 6th:
1:00pm – 5:00pm
(Vendor Set-up)

Sunday, July 7th:
9:00am – 5:00pm

Monday, July 8th:
11:00am – 5:00pm

Tuesday, July 9th:
11:00am – 5:00pm

Wednesday, July 10th:
9:00am – 1:00pm
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXHIBITOR NAME</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACB Angels</td>
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<td>ACB Mini Mall</td>
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<td>ACB Mini Mall</td>
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<td>AIRA</td>
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<td>American Braille Flag Project</td>
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<td>Blind Girl Designs</td>
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<td>Bosma Enterprises</td>
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<td>Braille Bibles International</td>
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<td>Bureau of Engraving and Printing</td>
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EMERGENCY SERVICES AND RESOURCES

VA Care and Urgent Care Facilities

JACKSONVILLE 1 VA CLINIC (2 miles)
Hours: Monday – Friday 8:00am – 5:30pm
Address: 1536 North Jefferson St, Jacksonville, FL 32209
Phone: (904) 475-5800

NAVAL AIR STATION JACKSONVILLE- NAVAL HOSPITAL
JACKSONVILLE — TRICARE (11.2 miles)
Hours: 24-hour Emergency Room
Address: 2080 Child St, Jacksonville, FL 32214
Phone: (904) 542-7300

CARESPOT URGENT CARE — JACKSONVILLE ARLINGTON CESERY (3.6 miles)
Hours: 7 days a week from 8:00am – 8:00pm
Address: 1021 Cesery Blvd, Jacksonville, FL 32211
Phone: (904) 743-2466

CARESPOT URGENT CARE — JACKSONVILLE SAN MARCO (3.7 miles)
Hours: 7 days a week from 8:00am – 8:00pm
Address: 4498 Hendricks Ave, Jacksonville, FL 32207-6326
Phone: (904) 854-1730

Veterinary Care

SAN MARCO ANIMAL HOSPITAL (1.7 miles)
Hours: Monday – Friday 7:00am – 6:00pm, Saturday 8:00am – 6:00pm, and Sunday 10:00am – 5:00pm
Address: 1546 San Marco Blvd, Jacksonville, FL 32207
Phone: (904) 516-9767

FOREVER VETS ANIMAL HOSPITAL AT RIVERSIDE (1.9 miles)
Hours: Monday – Saturday 7:00am – 7:00pm, Sunday 10:00am – 5:00pm
Address: 580 College St, Jacksonville, FL 32204
Phone: (904) 204-2191

RIVERSIDE ANIMAL HOSPITAL (3.3 miles)
Hours: Closed Monday and Sunday,
Open Tuesday – Friday 7:00am – 6:00pm, and Saturday 7:00am – 2:00pm
Address: 2641 Park St, Jacksonville, FL 32204
Phone: (904) 388-3494
EMERGENCY SERVICES AND RESOURCES

Other Medical Facilities

BAPTIST MEDICAL CENTER JACKSONVILLE (1.3 miles)
Hours: 24 hours daily
Address: 800 Prudential Dr, Jacksonville, FL 32207
Phone: (904) 202-2000

WOLFSON CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL - MAIN CAMPUS (1.3 miles)
Hours: 24 hours daily
Address: 800 Prudential Dr, Jacksonville, FL 32207
Phone: (904) 202-8000

UF HEALTH JACKSONVILLE (2.3 miles)
Hours: 24 hours daily
Address: 655 W 8th St, Jacksonville, FL 32209
Phone: (904) 244-0411

ASCENSION ST. VINCENT’S RIVERSIDE (3.1 miles)
Hours: 24 hours daily
Address: 1 Shircliff Way, Jacksonville, FL 32204
Phone: (904) 308-7300

Pharmacies and Groceries

HARVEY’S SUPERMARKET (.6 miles)
Hours: Monday – Sunday 7:00am – 10:00pm
Address: 777 Market St, Jacksonville, FL 32202
Phone: (904) 632-0844

WALGREENS (1.3 miles)
Hours: Monday – Friday 8:00am – 6:00pm, Saturday 9:00am – 3:00pm, and
Sunday 9:00am – 1:00pm
Address: 836 Prudential Dr Suite120, Jacksonville, FL 32207
Phone: (904) 202-5288

PUBLIX SUPERMARKET/PHARMACY (2.4 Miles)
Store Hours: Monday – Sunday 7:00am – 10:00pm
Pharmacy Hours: Monday-Friday 9:00am – 9:00pm, Saturday 9:00am – 7:00pm,
Sunday 11:00am – 6:00pm
Address: 2039 Hendricks Ave Ste 325, Jacksonville, FL 32207
Pharmacy Phone: (904) 523-7317