The BVA Beacon

*The New York Regional Group Newsletter*

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OFFICERS OF THE NEW YORK REGIONAL GROUP

President Arthur Morris Vice President Warner Murray Secretary Miguel Davis Treasurer Dennis O’Connell

2015 NATIONAL CONVENTION

By: Paul Kaminsky, DD5

This year’s National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky was a great success and a huge thanks needs to go out to all of our members and staff for their hard work and dedication.

We were successful in taking care of BVA’s very serious business and also able to enjoy each other’s friendship.

First, our election of National Officers saw a competition at the positions of National Vice President and National Secretary. Tom Zampieri (Texas) challenged Joe Parker (North Carolina) for the office of Vice President. When Joe Parker exceeded 50% of the vote count he was declared the winner. For the office of National Secretary Pete Davis (Virginia) challenged Paul Mimms (Kansas), and as Paul Mimms exceeded 50% vote tally he too was declared the winner. Four individuals were initially nominated for National Treasurer. Joe McNeil (Georgia) was the last man standing for that race. Our new National Officer placement is:

 National President Dale Stamper

National Vice President Joe Parker

National Secretary Paul Mimms

National Treasurer Joe McNeil

Current National District Directors are:

District 1 Dennis O'Connell

District 2 Dave Fox

District 3 Pete Davis

District 4 Ray Hale (Replaced Bob Mower)

District 5 Paul Kaminsky

District 6 Tom Zampieri

The convention began for the National Board of Directors on Saturday morning August 15. Saturday, Sunday and Monday the Board of Directors went over the business operations of the Association.

On Monday attendees enjoyed educational sessions covering topics such as Smart and mobile Phone Basics, Service Officer Information, iPhone and Android phone fundamentals. The day also included a trip to the American Printing House (APH) museum and factory and ending the day with ball park franks and a great baseball game.

Tuesday the educational sessions continued. New prosthetic devices were demonstrated by vendors. Devices like the ORCAM, Voiceye and iPad and iPhone Apps. The Rules and Credentials committees met and were open to a public forum. At 7 PM everyone had a great time and good food at the President's Reception.

 Wednesday the opening session introduce Sloan Gibson, Deputy Secretary of the VA. Following was the opening business session of the convention. Roll call indicated approximately 250 attendees were at the convention. Also attending the opening session were attending VA employees VIST, BROS and other VA representatives. The house was packed. After the opening business session came the opening of the Exhibit Hall. This year there were more than 40 vendors All had ample time to wander through the maze of vendors trying the newest of blind aids on the market. It is a good time for our VIST and BROS to see what is currently available for blind veterans.

Later on the Auxiliary had their meetings; followed by a legislative update, the Bylaws and Resolutions committee meeting, after which many members headed off for an evening of bowling.

 Thursday during the morning we had some great speakers talk about eye research, new therapy methods and techniques. For lunch we enjoyed ourselves at the annual Father Carroll luncheon. Father Carroll of course was the long time BVA National Chaplin from 1946 until his death in 1971. During the luncheon the guest speaker read Father Carroll's speeches that he gave over the years. Following the luncheon everyone listened to the candidates for National Office give their personal presentations. Then afterwards each District met individually for District discussions.

Friday, the very first thing was to attend the final business session. During the elections of National Officers the doors were closed and a roll call was made to ensure only voting members were present. Normal business was concluded. The recommendations of all the committees were approved; officer elections were completed as previously noted above. An emergency Bylaw was presented but failed to pass. Following the final business session there was training on the BVA Regional Manual. The manual had been reviewed, updated and approved by the National Board of Directors. The manual will eventually be uploaded to the BVA website. The convention closed with the Awards Banquet at which the newly elected officers were given their oath of office.

To wind things down Saturday attendees participated in a 5k run, walk, or roll along the river park. As the Director of District 5 (Florida, Georgia, Alabama) I appreciate your daily commitment to our mission and look forward to the good deeds we will accomplish together as we fulfill our promises to the men and women who served. Thank you for all you do. Next year slate of convention sites are: Return to Louisville, Jacksonville, Florida, Biloxi, Mississippi. I vote for Louisville!

MORE ABOUT THE CONVENTION

Just want to give a special shout out to the volunteering efforts of the numerous BVA members and individuals to poured many hours of personal time into making this year’s convention happen.

The OPS Committee spent much time arranging and planning the extracurricular activities like the baseball game, bowling outing, and the Saturday morning walk. Additionally, the OPS committee, via Danny Wallace, organized the color guard and scripts used in several of the ceremonies, and coordination with the local vAMC for support during the convention. Likewise the technology committee/workgroup put together the iOS and Android presentations, and hands-on sessions attended by many on Monday and Tuesday morning, and Monday afternoon. We even had Terry cover an additional request at the last minute.

Likewise, it’s the efforts of those on your Leadership and Education committee that updated the Regional Group Manual. It’s the personal drive of individuals like Paul Mimms, Ray Hale, and Jim Hogan that pulled together the Service Dog information and sessions. Its Tom Zampieri’s research connection that lead to Dr. Tonya Rex discussing her research on traumatic glaucoma. Its these types of personal efforts of the membership that will aid in the BVA’s abilities to attract more members to each convention, since we are learning from those who understand us the best, our peers.

This even fails to thank Margery and the numerous other volunteers that guide many of the BVA members from the airport, through the hotel, and to their seats in the various convention areas. The BVA Convention is our demonstration of how volunteering and internal/external outreach is crucial for the organization to survive.

I bring this up to demonstrate the BVA convention requires much preparation time from members and individuals who attend the convention outside of the business meetings. Its these extra efforts that often go unnoticed or applauded during the events, but we should take the time to say thanks for the countless hours of volunteering that goes into such endeavors.

Its these types of efforts were we see the BVA’s motto demonstrated, since we conduct these to improve in the experiences and aid our peers in everyday situations.

Thank you for your assistance,

Timothy Hornik

Questions about blindness, visit my website at:

http://BlindNotAlone.com

FYI

The Field Service Program is entering a period of transition to increase efficiency of services provided to blinded veterans. The Blinded Veterans Association is creating a Field Service Program Resource Center to be a one stop shop for services provided by BVA. The new FSP Resource Center will feature a dedicated toll free number which any blind veteran across the nation can call and receive services from any BVA National Field Service Officer regardless of where they live. This will streamline services and provide consistency to all veterans.

Starting September 01, 2015 all Field service calls will be routed through the new Field Service Program Resource Center. As part of this transformation, all of BVA’s National Field service Regional Offices will be relocating to the new Field Service Program Resource Center. All Volunteer Offices will remain open. The new Field Service Program Resource Center will be located in BVA Headquarters at 125 N West Street, Alexandria VA. To ensure all veterans have access the toll free number 844-250-5180 is active and will be temporarily routed through the Headquarters receptionist until the resource opens.