### 2017 NOMINATIONS FOR NACVSO OFFICES

1. **President**: 1 year Term (Mr. Ed Zackery is running).
2. **1st Vice President**: 1 year Term (Mr. Marty Caraway running).
3. **2nd Vice President**: 1 Year Term (Mr. Herman Breuer running).
4. **Judge Advocate**: 1 year Term
5. **2 Executive Board Members Open**: 2 Year Terms (Julia Encalade and Jane Roland running).

If you are interested in running for any of the above positions please send me an email with your information to jgolgart@nacvso.org or jgolgart@co.le-sueur.mn.us. We are always looking for individuals interested in getting involved with the Executive Board.

**Nominations will close at the end of the business meeting on Monday, June 12th, 2017 and will not be called for on Election Day which is Wednesday June 14th, 2017.**

**Thank You**
Jim Golgart, Immediate Past President

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For article submissions, contact: Charlene Cobb, NACVSO Editor
email: Charlene.Cobb@SheboyganCounty.com

If any corrections need to be made for the next newsletter please forward them to me.
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PRESIDENT’S ARTICLE

Well it seems another winter is almost behind us and we will be cruising into springtime soon. Which means we were making all the preparations for our upcoming Twenty-Seventh Annual Training and Conference in San Diego, California. Your Executive Board had the opportunity to tour the Town and Country Hotel and it is a wonderful resort hotel for this year’s conference. We hope to see as many members as possible and we have some great training planned, with a totally revamped “Certified Veterans Advocate (CVA)” course. Check out the website for more information on the training.

Speaking of the website, we rolled out the new website this past September and although we have had some minor issues, overall we have gotten some very positive feedback on it. With that said, we are still making some minor changes, especially to the Blog/Forum portion of it. We hope to show you all the capabilities of the site at the conference.

Your Executive Board has been very busy this past few months getting ready for the New Year. We have updated our membership database and are in the process of updating CEU’s and all the accreditations for those that are no longer members our working as a CVSO. Some of this was requested by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). I cannot tell you how important it is for you to notify us when you leave or position as a CVSO. The only way we know you are still working as a CVSO is by your membership application each year. Going forward we will be forwarding to OGC the names of delinquent members for revocation of accreditation. As an association, we simply cannot risk that someone is no longer a CVSO but still can gain access to vital confidential information.

We are gearing up for our very first Leadership Summit in April, to be held in Atlanta, Georgia. Our goal is to facilitate effective dialogue of regional best practices on effective collaborative veteran’s advocacy. It is a new endeavor for NACVSO and we are hoping to see it work. We have been busy bringing on corporate partners to help assist in these summits as well as moving forward. Again I hope you all weather the winter well and I am looking forward to seeing you all soon in Sunny California. I know the California delegation has been working hard and has lots of fun in the sun activities planned for your down time at the conference.

SCHOLARSHIP NEWS

We are now accepting scholarships for the San Diego 2017 conference! With successful fundraising efforts, we are able to give 8 scholarships this year! All information regarding the scholarships, including policy & procedures and the application, is listed on our website at: https://www.nacvso.org/conference/scholarships

All applications should be sent to olaschober@nacvso.org or Fax #630-553-0003, and will subsequently get an email indicating that their application was successfully received.

Please do not forget to bring an item to our “auction” that will be held on our banquet night. We loved seeing different items from all over the country last year! The proceeds from this, the 50/50 raffle, and other fundraising efforts will be contributed to next year’s scholarship.

-Olivia Laschober
A Marine walks into a pizza parlor and orders a pizza. The waiter asks, do you want that cut into 6 or 8 slices? The Marine responds, better make it 6, I’m not hungry enough for eight.

True humor requires that you have the ability to laugh at yourself. That being said, we can take a lesson from that joke. Perception is reality. We as an association right now are the 6 slices of pizza. We are as big as any of the other service organizations yet, we are perceived to be small and insignificant. We have been working to change this perception and slowly, we are succeeding.

NACVSO leadership has embarked on a new initiative, this being the Regional Leadership Summits. We identified that we all have very specific needs, hardships, successes, etc. When we discuss this at the national level, some of the information is lost simply because it may not apply to you, your office, or your veterans. We recognize that there are countless organizations that serve veterans, and unfortunately, we won’t be able to include them all. What we are doing is selecting 5 state regions and inviting leadership from those 5 states to include state directors/commissioners, presidents of CVS0 state associations, VA experience teams, prevalent non-profits and NACVSO strategic partners to begin the discussion on how we all can improve our services and leverage each other better to make the veterans experience more seamless and navigable. Our first summit will take place in Atlanta, GA on April 19-20, 2017. You can find more information on this on our website under the education and training tab.

We are still fighting the good fight to pass meaningful legislation that has been coined the “Appeals Modernization Act” and is wrapped up in the VA Accountability Act. Due to electoral politics, it did not pass in the last Congress but current members are excited to pass meaningful legislation that will make the entire claims process easier to understand (you wouldn’t think so reading the legislation). This is something NACVSO has been involved in since its inception and we have been a strong voice in these meetings as we are still the only organization that leaves the meetings and returns to a veteran sitting across the desk. This is legislation that makes reconsideration, NOD’s, new evidence, and appeals much more user friendly and eliminates confusing timelines. After every decision form the VA the veteran and advocate have 1 year to take the appropriate action.

Our partners at the Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program have launched an exciting new tool for us to utilize when we receive continued denials from the BVA. Hopefully you received the email with their flyer and introduction to their program. If not it is also on our webpage for your viewing.

I look forward to seeing you all in sunny San Diego. I think we will have one heck of a conference and I thank the entire California delegation for their hard work to give us a great experience.

Truly Yours,

Martin J. Caraway
1st Vice President
Over the past few months, I have been staying very busy through research and advocacy for women veterans. I have had the opportunity to meet in Washington DC with the Center for Women Veterans on a couple occasions at their collaborative meetings. Here, representatives from all different arenas come together to update others on the latest information and resources concerning women veterans. At the most recent visit to the Center for Women Veterans, I had the opportunity to speak with VHA, DOL, PVA, Minority Veterans, and Blind Veterans Representatives. All information regarding these important visits can be found on my portion of the website at https://www.nacvso.org/about/women-veterans. Please take a few minutes every so often and read up on the information that is on here.

I’m asking any individuals who have been working with others, have information or concerns, or have personally experienced the following to get in contact with me in order to work in partnership:

- BRCA 1 & 2 genes
- Female Sexual Arousal Disorder in the both the Veterans Health Administration and Veterans Benefit Administration
- Fort McClellan and health issues stemmed from contamination there
- Prosthetics and equipment unique to women

With your help, we can gather information and relay that, in fact, more than one individual woman veteran is dealing with one of these issues and it needs to be recognized and responded to. I can be reached at olaschober@nacvso.org and will respond to you as soon as possible. Let’s work together!

-Olivia Laschober

NACVSO TRAINING CONFERENCE 2017 – CALIFORNIA DREAMING!

San Diego, CA - Town and Country Hotel
Date: June 10-17, 2017
Place: San Diego, CA

$159.00 (Still Available)
There are several hotels close to the conference location. You may want to look into one on your own.

If you have a hotel reservation and are not going to use it please do not cancel it with the hotel; contact Julia Encalde, Conference director.

https://www.nacvso.org/members_only/2017-conference-registration
Hello Everyone,

On behalf of NACVSO, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you to the 2017 Conference. I’m not sure about you, but I’m California Dreaming. The California team has worked very hard to make sure you all have a wonderful time in San Diego. I’m hoping the following will help for your upcoming trip.

1. The hotel does not have a shuttle. Please, look for Supershuttle, make sure you tell them what Hotel (Town and Country Resort) you can call 1-800-blue-van and use code WJL8K to receive a discount.
2. There will be a box lunch.
3. This is a big property, make sure you have a good pair of walking shoes
4. Please, have your payment for registration paid, before the Conference.

I encourage you to contact me at any time with questions, comments, and feedback. I can be reached during regular business hours in the following ways: . Phone 228-236-7391 . Email: jencalade@nacvso.org or vetoff2@co.harrison.ms.us

See you soon!!!

Julia Encalade

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EDUCATION UPDATE

As the new NACVSO Education Chair, I am excited to reach out to all NACVSO members and share the current information and updates of the NACVSO Education Committee.

**CONTRACT TRAINING**

I would like to address Contract Training first. Our Contract Training Chair, Ms. Jane Roland and her entire team of incredibly devoted instructors, have been very busy. The Contract Training Team has already conducted 4 Contract Training events, successfully training over 200 CVSO’s. On the horizon, there are at least a few more Contract Trainings that will occur prior to all of us coming together in San Diego in June. This team in addition to all their normal CVSO Jobs, spend a lot of time and effort for this organization and continue to put out a top-notch product only found in NACVSO. If you are interested in Contract Training for your state, or you are interested in becoming an NACVSO instructor, please contact Jane Roland at jroland@nacvso.org

**Certified Veterans Advocate**

Over the course of several months following the NACVSO Conference in Myrtle Beach, SC, the NACVSO Certified Veterans Advocate (CVA) program, has gone through a huge transformation. This transformation has produced a completely redesigned product that will help CVSO’s enhance their advocacy tool kit and become more effective assisting veterans in the claims process beyond the Notice of Disagreement. The lead on this new product will be led by the new NACVSO CVA Coordinator, Ms. Katrina Eagle. In addition, Ms. Eagle will be joined by Ms. Amy Kretkowski, both have years of experience in Law and Advocacy, and both deal with appellate level issues daily.

The eligibility, pre-requisites, curriculum and total program hours have changed under the new CVA program. All the information for the CVA program can now be found on the NACVSO website. Once an NACVSO member is logged onto the website, they can go under the Members Only section of the webpage and then click on the Education and Training Resources tab. Click on the Certified Veterans Advocate link and all the CVA information will be listed. To enroll into the CVA program, an NACVSO member must take two initial steps. First, elect “CVA” on the conference registration form and Pay the $100.00 onetime fee. If a member has already paid in the past, they will not need to pay again, simply write “Already Paid” on your registration form. Second, the member must fill out and complete the CVA application also found on the NACVSO website at the bottom of the page on the CVA link. Click on the “Click Here to Complete the Application” link. When filling out the application, please ensure that all required documents are uploaded. This year we will have 50 seats available for the class. After the first 50 are registered the class will be full.

If you have any questions regarding any of this information, please feel free to reach out to me at any time at rward@nacvso.org and I will be happy to assist you.

Robert F. Ward, Education Chair
Did you know you have 120 days to file your veteran’s appeal?

Act now, save time, and use this new tool to file online.

If your veteran has a denial from the Board of Veterans Appeals (BVA), this online application provides an easy way to appeal to the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, as well as apply for Pro Bono Program help. The application also allows you to request our help if your veteran’s case is already at the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.

Remember, you have only 120 days to appeal a denial from the BVA so use this link and apply online today. Take advantage of this online tool if your veteran meets the following criteria:

- is a veteran (or qualifying family member of a veteran),
- has received an adverse decision (denial) from the BVA, and
- is not already represented by an attorney.

**STEP 1:**

www.vetsprobono.org

Click on the “Click Here to Apply Online” button.

**STEP 2:**

- If you are a veteran, family member, survivor, or caregiver, click the “I am Appealing” button.

  OR

- If you are a Veterans Service Officer representing a veteran, family member, or survivor, click the “I am Helping File the Appeal” button.

You will be prompted through a series of questions in our user-friendly online form.

**Need help filling out this online webpage?** Call us at 855-446-9678 during business hours (9am – 5pm Mon – Fri EST), and we will be happy to assist you.
BVA DENIAL WEB-TOOL

Did you know we have only 120 days to appeal a Board of Veterans Appeals (BVA) adverse decision, also called a BVA denial? The NACVSO leadership and our mission partner The Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program continue to see veterans who miss this crucial appeal deadline. Fortunately, there is a solution. By using a new web tool, you can help your Veterans appeal their BVA denials online. Just fill in a few pieces of information, answer a few questions and the appeal forms will be filed with the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims in a timely manner.

Please go to www.vetsprobono.org/apply/ to find the tool and use it.

Our trusted mission partner, The Veterans Consortium, has a nationwide volunteer corps of 2,000 free attorneys and related pro bono professionals, who have taken nearly 5,000 veterans’ cases free of charge since 1992. Please use the tool on their website to promptly meet the filing deadline for your Veterans who need to appeal a BVA denial. If you have any questions while using it, please call The Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program at 855-446-9678 from 8am-5pm EST.

In celebration of its Silver Anniversary, The Veterans Consortium (TVC) has stepped up its outreach to the veterans and their families, caregivers, and survivors that we jointly serve. As part of this increased outreach TVC has rolled out a new website tool designed specifically to help Service Officers assist veterans in timely appealing a BVA denial to the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims. It takes less than 15 minutes to complete the 15 questions on the website, to successfully file the appeal and “stop the clock” (please see the information sheet previous page in this newsletter which explains the step-by-step process). At the same time, this timesaving and user-friendly online tool enables Service Officers to help their veterans request a highly skilled and specially trained free attorney. If there is at least one issue of merit and a pro bono lawyer is assigned, the attorney will serve the veteran at NO COST.

The Veterans Consortium is the leading national 501C-3 charity providing free legal counsel to veterans in need for the past 25 years, to assist veterans all over the world with their federal court appeals of BVA denials. TVC has helped Service Officers and their Veterans in every single U.S. State and Territory, and TVC is a trusted nonprofit mission partner of NACVSO. With an outstanding 82% lifetime success rate and a perfect record at the Supreme Court (both were unanimous decisions for the Veterans) since the founding of The Veterans Consortium, their dedicated volunteers seek to provide the best legal services to veterans needing to appeal the denied claims. Get started today and beat the 120-day deadline!

State Delegates please send Elizabeth Ledvina your names and emails with your alternates as soon as possible to eledvina@nacvso.org.
SPRING CLEANING

Proverbs 24:30-32 – 30 I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; 31 And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. 32 Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction.

Growing up, my grandparents had a rather large garden every year – a few rows of corn, green beans, cabbage, tomatoes, even strawberries – pretty much everything you could grow. And I lived just far enough way that I didn’t spend a lot of time with them or their garden until it came time to put the “harvest” away.

I remember spending lots of hours after school and on weekends stringing beans, shucking corn, and topping strawberries. And Grandma would be in the kitchen canning and getting other vegetables ready for freezing.

I dreaded that time of year, because I knew we were in for a lot of work. What I didn’t see was the work that was involved in tending the garden.

A couple of years ago, my wife and I decided to have a little garden. Maybe plant a few tomatoes, lettuce, carrots, and green peppers. I even built raised beds to try to keep the rabbits out.

At first, we were fairly diligent in keeping the weeds away, but as the summer dragged on (and the outside temperatures rose), our diligence began to waiver. Some days I would come home from work and instead of weeding the garden, I wanted just to relax or I would find something to do to avoid going out there. A week would pass and the weeds would be two feet tall. I quickly realized how a little laziness allows things to get out of control in the garden.

And instead of spending a few minutes every day weeding the garden, I had to spend a couple of hours weeding one row. I learned a very important lesson then: Things will grow whether you work or not.

We had a decent harvest that year, but it came at a higher price of work and labor than it should have, and we gained less than we could have.

In the Scripture referenced above, Solomon is looking at a field and he points out the problems. Thorns and thistles have overgrown the fruit-bearing plants, and the wall around the field has broken down.

He gives advice to his son, but it can be applied both to the physical and the spiritual.

In a garden, what is the natural enemy of a gardener? Weeds. You don’t have to do anything to grow weeds. They are the easiest plant to grow. But what do weeds do? They steal nutrients and choke out the good plants.

Luke 8:7 – And some (seed) fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it.

Now look inside yourself. Weeds represent our fleshly desires. What have you allowed to rise up in your life? What have you allowed to take time, energy, and resources from what is good? Is it a pet sin? Is it a habit that isn’t necessarily bad but distracts from God’s plan? You don’t have to do anything for them to become a bigger part of your life.

You keep telling yourself that you need to do something about it but never do. Before long, that habit has become a massive hindrance.

Luke 8:14 – And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.

One thing about weeds: the bigger they are, the more of a scar they leave. The more something grows in your life, the harder it is to get rid of it.

No what is the purpose of having a wall around the garden? To keep things out that would harm or destroy it. But even a rock wall will deteriorate over time.

Ecclesiastes10:18 – By much slothfulness the building decayeth; and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through.

It constantly needs to be mended. That’s why ranchers will take the time to drive around their land and check the fences.
Heroes With Hearing Loss

As a Veteran Service Officer, you have first-hand experience with the unshakable bond that exists among veterans. The camaraderie, compassion and credibility instantly transform strangers into brothers and sisters. This is the founding principle of the Heroes With Hearing Loss program and the resulting conversation.

Heroes With Hearing Loss is a platform of engagement. A place to share personal experiences and lifestyle-focused solutions with the more than 1.5 million veterans with hearing-related injuries.

“Our goal is to start the conversation and raise awareness among veterans with hearing loss,” said Shari Penner, the Heroes With Hearing Loss Program Manager. “We want veterans and their families and friends talking about what makes hearing loss such a unique challenge for them.”

For many veterans, particularly those who’ve experienced combat, hearing loss is often overshadowed by the other challenges they face as a result of their service – such as traumatic brain injury or PTSD. Hearing loss is often intertwined both physically and emotionally as a trigger, and a constant reminder of what they have sacrificed for their country.

There is not a single solution for veterans with hearing loss, but fortunately, there are many techniques and technology-based solutions available. For example, as a Veteran Service Officer, you can certify a veteran’s hearing loss enabling them to receive a Hamilton CapTel captioned telephone at no cost through the Heroes With Hearing Loss program. This is completely independent of the VA disability claim process and the veteran’s hearing loss does not have to be service connected. All you have to do is complete a simple certification/order form, which is also now available on-line.

“I’ve been working with the Heroes With Hearing Loss program for more than a year, and I recommend it to every veteran I see with hearing loss,” says former NACVSO President Jim Golgart. “It’s very easy and has proven enormously beneficial – even life-changing.”

To learn more about the Heroes With Hearing Loss program, how you can certify a veteran for a no-cost captioned telephone, or get information on setting up a demo phone in your office, call 800-974-1517 or visit: http://www.heroeswithhearingloss.org/vso-certify

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Mission Statement
NACVSO’s membership will actively promote the rights of veterans and dependents of the United States through a progressive legislative platform. We will work collaboratively with the Department of Veterans Affairs and other nationally chartered veterans organizations to assure that veterans and their dependents receive the entitlements they deserve for the sacrifices they endured.

Vision Statement
NACVSO will continue to promote and protect the rights of veterans and their dependents through education, communication and technology.

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