

# EyesRight

Summer 2022 Edition



## The Healing Power of Music

By David Burden  
VSC Project Manager

The therapeutic use of musical instruments can be traced back to King David, the sweet psalmist of Israel, a mighty warrior, and a great king. King David was a man of war and, no doubt, faced many traumatic events throughout his life.

Interestingly enough, David played the stringed instrument and wrote music that had a calming effect on King Saul. King Saul displayed severe symptoms of a troubled mind in which he would become violent and paranoid toward others. Fortunately, David's musical skills brought mental stability to King Saul. Similarly, to David and Saul, music can positively impact the modern-day warrior as it has throughout history.

According to Chad Cooper, in 1945, the War Department developed a program that would help recondition and treat wounded service members while hospitalized. Subsequently, music therapy has thrived as a vital treatment piece to help Veterans readjust from combat trauma and find normalcy.

VA medical centers and treatment facilities across the country have provided hundreds, if not thousands of treatment sessions through board-certified music therapists.

Northport VA Medical Center in Northport, NY, is a prime example of a successful music therapy program. In 2020, the center won the Gold Medal from the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. Peter Mohan, a Marine Corp Veteran, credits the program for helping him to find healing and now successfully plays and writes guitar music.



Northport's creative arts therapist, Tracey Enright, describes the program as person-centered with individualized music therapy programs and music-related wellness services. Educating and offering a variety of skills in music, art, dance, drama, and creative writing are excellent vehicles to enhance self-expression and self-empowerment.

For the Veterans Service Commission (VSC), we are thankful for Frank McFadden expressing a desire and passion for bringing guitar lessons to Summit County Veterans. Frank laid the groundwork in 2020 with Fret for Vets, and later, he and David Burden were able to create a Guitars 4 Vets (G4V) Akron Chapter.

Because the VSC houses VetCenter Counseling services, we are considered a hybrid hosting site for a G4V Chapter. The Chapter meets on Thursdays from 4:00 to 6:00 pm at 1060 E. Waterloo Rd. Akron. If you are interested in taking classes or volunteering your time as an instructor, please get in touch with Frank McFadden at 234-716-6796 or David Burden at 330-643-7636. ★

## What Does the Passing of the New PACT Act Mean for Your VA Benefits and Care?

The passing of the PACT Act is a tremendous victory for VA health care and benefit expansion. Officially named The Sergeant First Class (SFC) Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act, the law helps provide Veterans exposed to burn pits and other toxic substances receive the [treatment and benefits](#) they've earned. Some Veterans' survivors can also receive compensation payments under the PACT Act.

Burn pits are described as continuously burning fires on bases overseas that were used to consume the military's trash and in return, produced toxic smoke. The PACT Act will ensure Veterans who were exposed to these toxic environments will receive health care screenings for an additional 20 presumptive conditions, including brain cancer, chronic bronchitis and many more illnesses.

The law expands eligibility for VA health care for Veterans of the Vietnam, Gulf War, and post-9/11 eras. The PACT Act also improves research, staff education and treatment related to toxic exposures, and adds more presumptive-exposure locations for Agent Orange and radiation that qualify for PACT Act-related benefits.

To ensure you receive high-quality health care through the VA, to file a disability claim, or help with a denied DIC claim, contact the Summit County Veterans Service Commission at 330-643-2830 or stop by our office. ★

# Director's Corner



## Environmental Health Registry Evaluation for Veterans

The VA's health registry evaluation is a free, voluntary medical assessment for Veterans who may have been exposed to certain environmental hazards during military service. The evaluations alert Veterans to possible long-term health problems that might be related to exposure to specific environmental hazards during their military service. The VA has established several health registries to track and monitor the health of specific groups of Veterans. The registry data helps the VA understand and respond to these health problems more effectively.

Environmental health registries offer medical assessments that are:

- Free to eligible Veterans. No co-payment
- Available regardless of enrollment in the VA's health care system
- Based on recollection of service, not on military records
- Available for additional evaluations if new problems develop
- Not a disability compensation exam or required for other VA benefits

You may be eligible to participate in one or more of these health registries:

- [Agent Orange Registry](#)
- [Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry](#)
- [Gulf War Registry](#) (includes operations Iraqi Freedom and New Dawn)
- [Ionizing Radiation Registry](#)
- [Depleted Uranium Follow-Up Program](#)
- [Toxic Embedded Fragment Surveillance Center](#)

Visit: <https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/benefits/registry-evaluation.asp>

**Veterans may contact their local VA Environmental Health Coordinator about [registry evaluations](#) or [health concerns related to military exposures](#)**

**Louis Stokes Cleveland VA Medical Center**  
8787 Brookpark Road  
Parma, OH 44129

**Nadine Lawrence**  
(216) 739-7000 x 40352  
[Nadine.Sanders@va.gov](mailto:Nadine.Sanders@va.gov)  
Fax: (216) 739-7094

The registry evaluation is separate from the VA's disability compensation process and does not confirm exposure to environmental hazards during military service. Veterans who want to be considered for disability compensation for exposure-related health problems must [file a claim for disability compensation](#). During the claim process, the VA will check military records to verify exposure to the claimed environmental hazard or qualifying military service. If necessary, the VA will set up a specific compensation examination.

In Appreciation,

*Larry D. Moore*

Executive Director



## Services for Vets

We provide financial assistance\* for basic living needs to eligible Veterans and their dependents.

- Mortgage payments
- Rent
- Utilities
- Food
- Children's school clothing
- Adult work clothing
- Dentures, glasses and hearing aids

### Free to Veterans!

- Regularly scheduled transportation for medical appointments at VA medical facilities and Ohio Veterans Home

\* Other types of financial assistance may be considered on a case by case basis. All types of assistance are subject to change based on need and funding.

### Veterans Affairs Assistance

- Assistance applying for Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits
- Preparation of VA forms and paperwork
- Supportive documentation of claims and pertinent data
- Proper submission of claims to the VA
- Service connected compensation
- Non-service pension
- Widows pension
- Burial benefits
- Headstones

*If you are a Veteran in financial need or need help with your VA claim, please visit us at 1060 E. Waterloo Rd., Akron, OH, or call*

**(330) 643-2830.**





## Lines of Healing, Hope and Lifetime Memories

### *Cast it Forward Gives Veterans the Thrill of a Lake Erie Fishing Excursion*

Sometimes there's no better cure for the stresses of our landbound lives than a few peaceful hours on the water.

Art Panfil knows this to be true. He's experienced it throughout his more than 30 years of fishing the waters of Lake Erie and he is now seeing it through the eyes of appreciative kids, Veterans and seniors who benefit from [Cast it Forward](#), the non-profit organization he established to share the joy of spending a day on the lake in a fully outfitted fishing boat.



*Art Panfil, left, and Bill Holk, right.*

a Korean War Vet, donate countless hours in support of military causes, youth organizations, his church and a local hospital. Cast it Forward, founded in 2021, honors his father's memory by opening the wonders of Ohio's greatest natural resource to those who are either physically or financially unable to do so themselves. His ultimate hope is that participants will find the serenity he enjoys while casting his lines far from the shore.

Based on the feedback of several Veterans, Panfil and his small team of volunteers are more than catching their "limit" during these free, all-inclusive excursions. Among those who have joined Panfil for hours of great fishing and

"I really want to be able to support Veterans and give back, and this is our small way of trying to make a difference," Panfil explains.

This desire to give back comes naturally, as Panfil watched his father,



*Gene Wright 97 yrs young Navy Veteran participant*

good conversation are a 97-year-old World War II Veteran for whom catching a walleye was a remaining bucket list challenge. It turns out the Veteran caught all the fish that day.

Other recent participants were a Vet who had been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and a blind, 94-year-old Navy Vet who had been a longtime angler before losing his sight. Panfil worked closely with family members to accommodate the Vet's special needs, resulting in an unforgettable experience for all, including Panfil himself.

Cast it Forward provides all fishing gear, snacks, lunch and beverages. All that's required of participants is that they have a valid Ohio fishing license, wear soft-soled shoes and arrive at the dock at the scheduled time. Panfil often speaks with participants by telephone prior to their excursion to understand their unique needs and expectations and to gain a sense of how he can provide the most rewarding experience possible. Small groups are preferred.

"If you want to go out and experience the healing powers of the water, or if it's something you used to do and haven't been able to in a while, please get in contact with us and we'll do everything in our power to make that happen for you," he says.

To learn more about Cast it Forward and to contact Art Panfil, simply visit [www.castitforwardfishing.com](http://www.castitforwardfishing.com). Be sure to read about the experiences of other Veterans who have benefitted from Panfil's generosity. Then use the website's "Contact" tab to request more information and begin the process of booking a fishing excursion.★



*Andy Hocevar 94 yrs young Navy Vet*



## A Hand-Up for Veterans – Volunteer or Donate Today!

Laura's Summit County Stand Down gives homeless and displaced Veterans a hand-up by offering free services such as mental health counseling, dental and vision exams, employment training and more. To continue providing much needed items and services for the homeless and displaced Veterans of Summit County, we encourage all those who are able to consider volunteering or donating to the Summit County Stand Down. To learn more about this non-profit organization, the services or volunteer opportunities it offers, or to make a tax-deductible gift, please visit [summitcountystanddown.org](http://summitcountystanddown.org). ★



## You're Invited to the VSC Annual Cookout

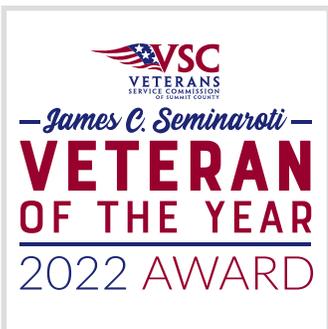
Join us for music, games, free food, raffles—all the FUN! Our annual cookout for Veterans will be held Oct. 29 at our Akron office from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Spread the word and join us for a grilled lunch and a celebration of freedom! We can't wait to see you! [RSVP on our website today.](#) ★



## 2022 Summit County James Seminaroti Benefit Golf Outing Scheduled – RSVP Today!

The VSC and American Legion Post #473 invite area golfers to attend the 6th Annual James Seminaroti Benefit Golf Outing for ALS, scheduled Monday, Oct. 10, 2022, at the Good Park Golf Course in Akron. The event, which costs \$80 per person, includes 18 holes of golf (cart included), lunch at the turn, prizes and a 50/50 raffle. Check-in begins at 8 a.m., and tee times begin at 9 a.m. (shotgun format).

RSVP is required. Participants should contact Gordon Dean at 330-643-2805 or [gdean@vscsummitoh.us](mailto:gdean@vscsummitoh.us) for registration and payment information. For more details about sponsorship opportunities or to register, [download this form.](#) ★



## We're Accepting Nominations for the 2022 Veteran of the Year Award

Do you know a selfless, local honorably discharged Veteran that is committed to helping and serving Veterans and the Summit County community? Join us in recognizing a deserving Veteran for their contributions and sacrifices at this year's Veteran of the Year dinner on Thursday, October 20, at the Summit County VSC Headquarters in Akron. Nominate a local hero today by downloading this [nomination form](#). For more information on the recognition dinner, visit our [website](#) or call 330-643-7636. ★



## VSC School Clothing Voucher Applications Available NOW

Now through Oct. 31, 2022, Summit County Veterans who demonstrate a financial need can apply for school clothing vouchers good toward the purchase of non-uniform and uniform school clothing, including winter outerwear. Recipients must be the child or qualify independent of an honorably discharged Veteran who has been a resident of Summit County for at least 90 days. The VSC will accept completed applications Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., at its Akron headquarters. For more details, call 330-643-7636. ★