



THE *Forward Observer*

NATIONAL NEWSLETTER OF THE
American Veterans FOR Equal Rights

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SEPTEMBER 2005

OPERATION: LIFT THE BAN IV *AVER 2005 CONVENTION, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA*



California Circuit Court Judge and *Veterans C.A.R.E* Member Donna L. Groman (FAR RIGHT)
Presides Over the Swearing In of New National Officers (LEFT TO RIGHT) A.J. Rogue, President,
Ben Gomez, Secretary, Lara Ballard, Treasurer, and
David Guy-Gainer, Vice President.
Holding the Bible is A.J.'s Husband, Jeff Rogue (FAR LEFT)



A Word from The President

So much to cover and a somewhat limited space in which to do it in, though the newsletter editor was kind enough to allow me a few extra paragraphs.

First of all, I'd like to thank everyone for extending me the honor of serving as your president for the next two years. I look forward to continuing the progress we've already begun over the past year, thanks to the efforts of many individuals, all of whom I'm sure will be mentioned later on.

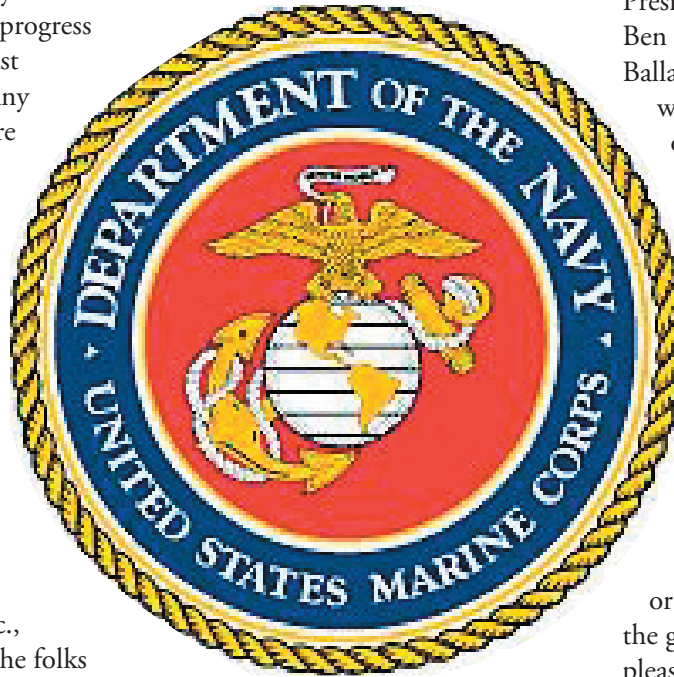
Let me begin with the convention held in L.A. over the Fourth of July weekend. While the attendance numbers for the convention were somewhat disappointing, compared to conventions in the past, the convention itself was far from disappointing.

Despite a false start and having to overcome difficulties with securing proper venues, etc., Commander Ed Westrick and the folks of *Veterans C.A.R.E* managed to pull off what can honestly be called yet another successful national convention, pictures of which you'll see later on in this issue.

What made this convention particularly successful is the fact that it was highly productive. It gives me great pride to report that after several years — again, thanks to the dedication of several individuals; Chief Jim Donovan and John Ames key among them — we now have a condensed, up-to-date version of our National Bylaws.

Michael Kilmer, VP of Strategic Planning, did an outstanding job of putting together a presentation on the work we've accomplished on our

five-year strategic plan. Something which could not have happened without Michael's vision, guidance, and patience. For those of you who weren't fortunate to witness the presentation live, the text has been included in the newsletter. Keep in mind, this is a work in progress. Nevertheless, I'm sure you'll agree we've managed to accomplish quite a bit. A sincere thanks



to all those individuals who helped contribute. This includes most, if not all of the past board members, RVPs, and chapter presidents.

David Guy-Gainer, VP of chapter development and recently elected National Vice President, gave a presentation on chapter development and helped outline goals for strategic organizational growth and expansion, all tying in with our five-year goals. Budget details were hammered out, awards were given, and the list goes on and on. I could mention them here, but I wouldn't want to spoil it for the committee chairs and VPs, so I leave it

up to them to fill you in.

I will close the convention portion by saying thank you to my departing board members Treasurer Hank Thomas and Vice President Ken Sholes. It was truly a privilege having you both on my board. Thank you for your help and support in helping *AVER* through some rough weather.

To my new national board: Vice President David Guy-Gainer, Secretary Ben Gomez, and Treasurer Lara Ballard, I look forward to serving with you over the next two years of our administration with great expectations and enthusiasm for what lies ahead for our grassroots organization.

Okay, moving forward. As you will see by the strategic plan, we have quite an aggressive agenda planned for ourselves over the next few years. And in order to accomplish our goals, we're going to need your help. If you're already involved in one aspect

or another, thank you and keep up the great work. If you aren't involved, please, we need your help. Coming up very soon is the first ever *National Veterans Coming out Day*, spearheaded by *NEO AVER* chapter president and national webmaster Marie Bohusch of Ohio. We're urging all veterans, in conjunction with *National Coming Out Day*, to come out as GLBT veterans.

That's one immediate way to help our cause. Another way, closer to home, is to become involved in one of the many committees currently in existence or soon to be formed. We're looking for volunteers to serve locally as VA officers, Public Affairs Officers, local Membership Chairs, and Web Administrators.

We're in need of people to help with fundraising and public speaking. If you have a flair for writing, check into possibilities of helping with the *Forward Observer*, our national newsletter. Not only are we seeking motivated people to help generate ads to help pay for the newsletter's next transition to a full color, glossy, magazine-like publication, we're also looking to expand the newsletter to include such things as book and movie reviews.

More importantly, you can make sure to renew your memberships, and encourage fellow veterans to join our organization.

As with anything, change is inevitable. After much discussion and debate, it was decided that there exists a justifiable need to raise the dues to \$35.00, the first time such a raise has occurred in the history of the organization. Why the increase in money? Fair question. To put it simply, it was necessary in order for national to continue to meet its financial obligations. What used to cover the printing and mailing of the newsletter is now going towards not only the newsletter, but also national brochures, print ads, fundraising sponsor letters, brochures, and certificates — all which help generate money and interest into the organization. Not to mention helping to cover the initial costs of such things as seed money for conventions, and our fledging programs. All which is explained in much more detail in the

treasurer's report.

Travel, too, must be taken into consideration. A good amount of money in the budget has been set aside for travel expenses to help cover the cost of travel incurred by our national officers. A frequent complaint heard often in the past was that people, other than the occasional phone call, rarely heard from their national officers, much less ever saw them. Well, we've all agreed this needs to change. Not only do we need to be seen; we need to make ourselves available to the general membership — to be there in person to listen to comments and concerns. We are, after all, serving as your representatives. A year ago I made mention that this was an open-door administration. That has not changed with the newly elected officers.

Well, that pretty much covers it for this issue. Again, thanks for your continued faith in having me serve as your National President. My door is always open. And again, I urge you to do whatever *you* can to become involved. We need you. The estimated 65,000 active duty GLBT currently serving need you. Not to mention the estimated 1 million GLBT veterans. We are here for you. And for them. Help us spread the word about *AVER*

Semper Fi

A J Rogue



***AVER* National President A.J. Rogue Presents HR 1059 Sponsor Congressman Martin T. Meehan, (D-MA) With An Honorary *AVER* Lifetime Membership At A Reception During *SLDN* Lobby Days.**

GRASSROOTS TEAM LEADERS NEEDED

Do you want to play a crucial role in the effort to repeal *Don't Ask,*

Don't Tell? If so, we need you to serve as a Grassroots Team Leader.

You need not be a chapter officer or involved in a local chapter in order to serve in this role. All you need is a willingness to research your Congressional representative and two Senators, and to engage in a regular, ongoing effort to lobby them throughout the year to support H.1059 — the Military Readiness Enhancement Act of 2005 (a companion bill on the Senate side has not yet been introduced). No trips to Washington, DC are necessary; in fact, we'd prefer that you meet your representatives in one of their home district offices.

We are particularly interested in individuals whose Congressional Representatives are on the House or Senate Armed Services Committees. Details can be found on the *AVER* BB website (password protected), or by contacting Lara Ballard, National Grassroots Coordinator, at treasurer@aver.us or 202. 408.0087.

If you do not know how to access the password-protected portion of the *AVER* website, contact Marie Bohusch, *AVER*'s webmaster, at webtech@aver.us

The ***Forward Observer***
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FOR

Equal Rights

PO Box 1490

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OPERATION: LIFT THE BAN IV



① National President A.J. Rogue Takes A Moment To Acknowledge Outgoing National Boardmembers
(L-R) Hank Thomas, Ben Gomez, and Ken Sholes



① Honored Guest and New Lifetime Member Sgt. Robert Stout.
② Chief Jim Donovan Receives a Standing Ovation and an Engraved Gavel Plaque In Recognition of His Term as National President.



① Lcpl. Jeff Key Prepares to Deliver the National Anthem at the Avalon Fundraiser.
② National Vice President Ken Sholes Presents Chicago Chapter President Jim Darby with the *AVER President's Award for Chapter Political Activism*.



AVER 2005 CONVENTION, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA



① James Apedaile, Ken Sholes, and Robert Stout
Patrick Bova, Sharon Alexander, and Paula Ridenour ②

① “First Lady” Jeff Rogue and National President A.J. Rogue
Veterans C.A.R.E Commander Ed Westrick and A.J. Rogue Present the Colors at the Avalon in West Hollywood ②



Newly Elected National Treasurer Lara Ballard with Palm Springs Chapter Member Brenda Vosbein. ③





Colorguard Members standing by to present the Colors at the Awards Banquet Saturday Evening.

(LEFT TO RIGHT)

Robert Stout, Ohio,
Jim Donovan, Illinois,
James Apedaile, Missouri,
and Tony Smith,
Washington D.C.

Palm Springs Mayor Ron Oden and *AVER* Past-President Jim Donovan Enjoy a Quiet Minute Together Before the Banquet ➡



Uniformed Banquet Attendees Pose for the Traditional Post-Banquet Uniform Portrait

(FRONT ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT)

John Ames, Lara Ballard,
A.J. Rogue, Darryl West,
Brenda Vosbein, Jim
Donovan

(BACK ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT)

Mel Tipps, Robert Stout,
David Guy-Gainer, Tony
Smith, James Apedaile



NATIONAL OFFICER REPORTS



DAVID GUY-GAINER —National Vice-President

I am deeply honored to have been elected as National VP and am proud to be serving with such motivated peers and special committees on the Board. I have met with members of the North Texas and Fort Worth Chapters, am scheduled to meet with the Fort Lauderdale Chapter, and made a brief visit with the Veterans for Peace at their annual convention in Dallas where I thanked them for their recently passed resolution calling for the demise of *DADT*.

In the past month I have spoken to the *No Nonsense in November* Coalitions in San Antonio and Austin. The essence of my presentations has been “There is nothing new about legislated discrimination! Gay and Lesbian Patriots have been serving our nation under such forever!” I find that not just our community but the public at large is supportive and prepared to take action toward the demise of the social injustice of *DADT*.

My personal goal this year is to continue to rebuild bridges and strike up new bonds with other National Organizations. I have an open “phone” position on the board so PLEASE feel free to contact me if there is anything I can do for you, your chapter, or region!

LARA BALLARD —National Treasurer

The Board of Directors finalized its budget for FY 06 by conference call vote on August 20, 2005. This budget may be subject to minor changes between August 20 and October 1, 2005, when it goes into effect, as well as quarterly reviews throughout the year, pending further research on the costs of particular items and services AVER may want to purchase in the coming year.

As many of our members may be aware, the Board also spent much of the

past year developing a comprehensive strategy document for AVER, under the highly effective guidance of VP for Strategic Planning Michael Todd Kilmer. The strategy document, which is still in the process of being finalized, identifies several key goals for the organization. The figures presented below represent the budget amounts approved by the Board on August 20, organized so that members can see how each expenditure relates to the specific goals and objectives of AVER.

GOAL 1: FREEDOM TO SERVE

AVER’s objective is to lift the ban on GLBT military service by 2010. It will seek to accomplish this objective by building a nationwide grassroots network of GLBT veterans that is capable of educating the public and key members of Congress as to why *Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell* is a bad and unworkable policy.

AVER’s National Vice President and VP for New Chapter Development, David Guy-Gainer, has implemented an aggressive strategy for chapter development that entails developing a target list of 24 cities, advertising in those cities, traveling to those cities (primarily in conjunction with their Pride events), collecting names, and assisting new GLBT veteran activists with establishing new chapters. The 24 target cities will be chosen based on a combination of factors, to include estimated local GLBT veteran population (based on figures from the Urban Institute study), voting patterns, and whether the cities’ Congressional representatives are considered key to the effort to repeal *Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell*.

Lara Ballard, AVER’s National Treasurer and National Grassroots Coordinator, will follow up with activists identified through the new chapter development process, providing them with petitions, information, training and advice on lobbying and

grassroots strategies.

These efforts will require a considerable amount of travel on the part of all Board members, to include Regional Vice Presidents, as well as other willing volunteers from existing chapters. Board members have traditionally paid for much of their travel out of pocket as an in-kind donation. Many board members and other volunteers will undoubtedly continue this practice; however, no AVER member traveling on AVER official business should be required to pay travel expenses if he or she cannot afford to do so. Therefore, AVER is asking prospective sponsors to support a travel budget that will allow for reasonable reimbursement of travel expenses.

In addition, this combined grassroots and chapter development strategy will require the payment of Pride registration fees, printing of petitions and chapter development packets, and targeted advertising. The total figures needed to support this vital program of AVER are as follows:

Travel	\$8000
Pride registration fees	\$3600
Advertising	\$2200
Printing and reproduction	\$ 765
Office and postage	\$ 660
Lobbying and advocacy training	\$ 100
TOTAL	\$15,325

GOAL 2: SUPPORT VETERANS, SERVICE MEMBERS AND FAMILIES

AVER needs to develop a capacity to provide direct support to GLBT

service members and families, as well as legal advice, referrals and other assistance to GLBT veterans with claims before the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. *AVER* intends to work with both the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (*SLDN*) and the Military Community Services Network (*MCSN*) in furtherance of these goals. Specifically, *AVER* anticipates providing a grant to *MCSN*, upon receipt of a grant request from *MCSN*, in order to enable *MCSN* to fulfill its mission of providing social support to GLBT service members and families by building its own capacity to provide referrals, social services and direct financial assistance.

In addition, *AVER* intends to provide its VP for Veterans Affairs, Denny Meyer, with funds for travel and training in veterans' advocacy (to include either a trip to Washington, DC to attend veterans' advocacy training hosted by the Vietnam Veterans of America, or various books and resources published by the National Veterans Legal Services Project).

Finally, *AVER* intends to acquire an official phone number with a voice-messaging system. This will not only enable callers to be directed to *SLDN*, *MCSN*, or other important resources, but will also enhance *AVER*'s ability to respond to calls from the media.

The amounts needed for these efforts are as follows:

Social services/financial assistance	\$2500
Travel and training	\$ 400
Phone number w/messaging system	\$ 200
TOTAL	\$3100

GOAL 3: PROMOTE VETERAN AND SERVICE MEMBER PRIDE

Going hand-in-hand with *AVER*'s

support to servicemembers and veterans and efforts to educate the public specifically about *Don't Ask, Don't Tell* are its ongoing efforts to promote GLBT veteran and servicemember pride. *AVER* will be upgrading its national website this year to allow for increased capacity for both *AVER* National and for local chapters who choose to sign onto *AVER* National's server. This will give GLBT veterans greater visibility, and the organization and all of its chapters a more professional look. Adjustments will also be made so that *AVER*'s website will be more easily found via standard search engines like Google.

AVER will be inaugurating the first annual *National Veterans Coming Out Day* on October 11, 2005. Funds are needed for both printing and promotional items, as well as travel for *NVCOD* Coordinator, Marie Bohusch.

AVER continues to participate in the Library of Congress Veterans History Project, which is vital to ensuring that the service and sacrifices of GLBT veterans are recorded in the nation's archives for future generations of historical researchers. *AVER*'s goal is for each chapter of *AVER* to conduct two videotaped oral history interviews per year. Several copies of each interview should be made (including one for *AVER*'s archives and one for the veteran) before mailing the original to the Library of Congress. Funds are requested for this purpose to defray the costs of reproduction and mailing.

Finally, certain high-profile events, such as the annual wreath-laying at Arlington Cemetery, should be attended by a national officer of *AVER*, and some travel funds should be set aside for this purpose.

The funds needed to carry out Goal 3 are as follows:

Website upgrade	\$950
Promotional items	\$700
Other <i>NVCOD</i> expenses	\$350

National officer travel	\$400
Veterans History Project	\$400
TOTAL	\$2800

GOAL 4: MEMBER SATISFACTION

The single greatest expense associated with membership satisfaction is the printing and mailing of the *Forward Observer*, *AVER*'s national newsletter. Over the next year, the *AVER* Board will be looking for ways both to defray the costs of this publication, by selling advertising, and also by polling its members to see if some would prefer having the newsletter e-mailed to them via a pdf file. However, hard copies of the *FO* must always be available to members who prefer a hard copy format, and extra copies are helpful to hand out at Pride events. The budgeted costs of the *FO* for this year, as well as costs associated with the Membership Coordinator's functions, take into account *AVER*'s anticipated 50% increase in membership, and President A.J. Rogue's intent to create a more professional look for the publication.

All Board members will be strongly encouraged to travel within their regions, and Regional VPs are each allocated \$300 to travel at least once within their region, either to visit with an existing chapter or to attend a regional conference (with the exception of the Region III VP, who plans on driving to Chicago and only needed \$40 in order to do so). Again, Board members will be encouraged, but not required, to pay for their own travel expenses as an in-kind donation. Regional VPs are also allocated funds for food and beverages and for venue and equipment rental associated with their regional conferences, as well as a "training fund" so that budding leaders within *AVER* can be sent to courses in nonprofit management, public affairs and advocacy.

The new sponsorship program, pursuant to which donors give between \$75 and \$500, requires *AVER* to incur certain expenses associated with acknowledging the tax-exempt contributions and properly thanking our sponsors so that they return next year. In addition, outstanding volunteers should from time to time be recognized with small tokens of esteem.

Finally, *AVER* must start saving now for the 2007 Convention, so that when the time comes to advance funds to **the host chapter, the funds will be available to give.**

The expenses associated with Member Satisfaction are as follows:

FO	(printing)
\$8000	
FO	(postage)
\$ 900	
Membership-related printing/postage	\$1200
Regional VP travel	\$1240
National officer travel	\$ 600
Regional conf. venue	\$ 500
Food and beverages	\$ 200
Training	\$ 190
Sponsorship medals/certificates	\$1300
Discretionary fund for gifts	\$ 170
Advance for 2007 Convention	\$2500
TOTAL	\$16,800

GOAL 5: ACHIEVE
SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

AVER needs to reinvest a certain amount of its funds back into further fundraising efforts, as well as meet the administrative and other miscellaneous expenses associated with maintaining a national organization. Brochures

will be printed this year, similar to the membership brochures, but explaining the advantages of sponsorship. These brochures will be available for distribution at Pride festivals and other venues to veterans and non-veterans alike.

Given that *AVER* has recently adopted new by-laws and is confronted with multiple legal questions regarding issues like nonprofit political advocacy, the Board has budgeted for both legal consultation fees and Directors' & Officers' liability insurance. It is very important, as *AVER* expands its operations, that those operations be conducted in accordance with law. Both current and prospective board members should be able to take comfort in the fact that their organization will protect them from legal liability. In addition, *AVER* needs to ensure that it maintains an adequate reserve fund so that bills can be paid promptly and *AVER* can save towards some of its longer-term goals.

The expenses associated with sustaining *AVER* as an organization are as follows:

Fundraising printing and postage	\$2000
Filing fees	\$ 480
P.O. box rental	\$ 420
Legal consultation fees	\$ 500
D&O insurance	\$ 900
Banking fees and bad debt	\$ 320
Misc. office supplies and postage	\$ 650
Reserve fund	\$4690

TOTAL
\$9,960

GRAND TOTAL
\$47,985

SOURCES OF INCOME

AVER anticipates receiving \$10,000 in income through membership dues in the coming year. \$1760 is the anticipated income to National if enough chapters sign on to *AVER* National's web server at a cost of \$70 per year. \$200 will likely be collected through miscellaneous contributions, and \$25 will accrue through interest. However, the main source of income will be through sponsorships and advertising in the *Forward Observer*, solicited in the specific amounts pledged by virtually all members of the current Board of Directors. The amounts pledged by the members of the current Board are as follows:

A.J. Rogue, President	\$10,000
David Guy-Gainer, Vice President	\$ 5000
Lara Ballard, Treasurer	\$ 5000
Ben Gomez, Secretary	\$ 2000
Marie Bohusch, Deputy Region I VP	\$ 2000
Tony Smith, Region II VP	\$ 5000
Ken Sholes, Region III VP	\$ 1000
James Apedaile, Region IV VP	\$ 2500

One or more of these boardmembers may be contacting you sometime soon to discuss possibilities for sponsorships and other support. Please give them your full consideration. They have an important job to do, and if they meet these crucial fundraising goals, *AVER* will be well on its way to establishing itself as the premier voice of GLBT veterans.





NATIONAL REPORTS (continued)



VP of STRATEGIC PLANNING

—Michael Todd Kilmer

Thanks to the dedication, organizational skills, and drive of Michael T. Kilmer in first fleshing out the plan, then riding herd on the rest of the board to make sure we got it done, *AVER* is proud to present the beginnings of a five year strategic plan. Though Michael wanted to be sure to point out that it is still a work in progress.

Work in progress or not, he is to be highly commended for his efforts; the results of which are posted on the next few pages.

Our Mission

AVER is a GLBT founded veterans' advocacy and service organization dedicated to the equal and fair treatment of all service members and veterans, while honoring the service and sacrifices of all service members and veterans.

Our Vision

AVER serves as a nationally recognized veterans' service organization for veterans and service members of the U.S. Armed Forces regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Core Values

Honor
Respect for Common Ground
Devotion to Mission
Social Justice
Patriotism

Step 2 – EMPOWER: Like a building being constructed, *AVER* needs a driving force behind it. With *AVER*, that driving force is its members and volunteers who can make their goals a reality.

Our Goals

1. Member Satisfaction
2. Freedom to Serve
3. Diverse and Compelling Programs
4. Exercise a Leadership Role in the Gays-in-the-Military Issue
5. Promote Service Member and Veteran Pride
6. Effective National Outreach and Market Penetration
7. Fulfill *AVER*'s Mission and Achieve Sustainable Growth

GOAL 1: Member Satisfaction

- Objective: Promote an inclusive community for all service members and veterans, who support *AVER*'s mission, regardless of status – officer or enlisted, active duty or reservist, combatant or non-combatant, disabled or not, and regardless of sexual identity or gender identification.

Strategies:

- o Initiate a "Stop Loss" and invite former members to re-join *AVER* by sending a letter from *AVER* National to each former member and by local Chapter President or Regional Vice President to personally contact former members in their geographical area.
- o Develop an on-line and printed (to be published with each issue of the *Forward Observer*) member satisfaction survey to solicit member feedback on what

AVER is doing well and what *AVER* can do differently.

Performance Measures:

- o An annual membership retention rate of 90%.

Responsible Parties:

Membership Chair, Regional Vice Presidents, and Chapter Presidents

Core Value: Honor, Respect for Common Ground, and Devotion to Mission

GOAL 2: Freedom to Serve

- Objective: Repeal and replace the ban preventing gays, lesbians and bisexuals from serving openly and honestly in the U.S. Armed Forces by 2010.

Strategies:

- o *AVER* membership from each congressional district, where *AVER* has membership, will participate in the Annual Congressional Outreach hosted by Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN).
- o *AVER* members will meet their local House and Senate offices to educate their representatives on *DADT* within the first 30 days and again at the 6 month mark after participating in the Annual Congressional Outreach hosted by SLDN.

- o Coordinate educational outreach efforts to elected officials with *AVER's* ally – *SLDN*.

Performance Measures:

- o % of Congressional Districts, where *AVER* has membership, represented by *AVER* at the Annual Congressional Outreach hosted by *SLDN*.
- o % of Congressional Districts and Senators, where *AVER* has membership, measured against the % that are met by *AVER* membership at the local offices.

Responsible Party: Vice President of Public Policy

Core Value: Social Justice

GOAL 3: Diverse and Compelling Programs

- **Objective:** Develop “Beyond *DADT*”, a dynamic set of programs of support for GLBT and Two-Spirit service members and veterans, while promoting a safe haven for camaraderie to develop amongst our membership.

Strategies:

- o In process – open dialogue with *MCSN* (Military Community Service Network) to Tony Smith, Executive Director. Pending items, mentor program, community

resources for GLBT and Two-Spirit service members and veterans, and network of mental health and spiritual care providers.

- o Establish a community fund to assist GLBT and Two-Spirit partners (spouses) and their identified family members.
- o Raise scholarship funds to support *AVER* membership in national and regional *AVER* activities.
- o Each *AVER* chapter is to host, based on their unique need, either a monthly or quarterly social event for service members and veterans to promote community.

Performance Measures:

- o Pending

Responsible Party: Chapter Presidents and Regional Vice Presidents

Core Value: Honor, Respect for Common Ground, Devotion to Mission, and Social Justice

GOAL 4: Exercise Leadership Role in the Gays-in-the-Military Issue

- **Objective 4a:** Build a viable grassroots network of GLBT and Two-Spirit veterans with skills and tools to effectively advocate for service members and veterans.

Strategies:

- o Establish Grassroots Team Leader within each district whose

congressional representative is on the House Armed Services Committee.

- o Establish Grassroots Team Leader within each state of whose senator is on the Senate Armed Services Committee.
- o Establish Grassroots Team Leader within each *AVER* chapter.
- o Provide annual advocacy training for team leaders.
- o Develop on-line and off-line tools to facilitate advocacy.
- o Network with the Department of Veterans Affairs and other Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) to keep current on veteran's issues and to educate them on the gays-in-the military issue.

Performance Measures:

- o **Measure:** 90% of the identified Advocacy Teams to have 3 successful contacts (i.e. 1 face-to-face visit, writing, and other) with their Congressional Representative.
- o **Measure:** 90% of the identified Advocacy Teams to have 3 successful contacts (i.e. 1 face-to-face visit, writing, and other) with their Senator.

Responsible Party: Vice President of Public Policy

Core Value: Social Justice

- **Objective 4b: An informed community (i.e. GLBT community at large, Armed Forces, Department of Veterans Affairs, traditional veterans service organization, etc.) on the unique issues of service members who continue to serve the U.S. Armed Forces in silence and for those veterans affected by *DADT*.**

Strategies:

- o Establish an *AVER* Educational Outreach Coordinator within each *AVER* chapter and an ancillary officer position at the National level.
- o Establish regional speakers bureau within each *AVER* region.
- o Coordinate education outreach effort with *AVER's* ally *MEI* (Military Education Initiative).

Performance Measures:

Responsible Party: Vice President of Public Policy

Core Value: Social Justice

- **Objective 4c: Advocacy – improved services and support for service members who continue to serve the U.S. Armed Forces in silence and for those veterans affected by *DADT*.**

Strategies:

- o Identify and educate GLBT and Two-Spirit friendly spiritual, social service, and healthcare providers for those currently

serving in the U.S. Armed Forces.

- o Educate the Department of Veterans Affairs Healthcare System on the unique needs of GLBT and Two-Spirit veterans, while working with the VA to establish a GLBT and Two-Spirit SEPM (Special Emphasis Program Manager) within each VA Medical Center.
- o Collaborate with *AVER's* ally *MCSN* (Military Community Service Network).

Performance Measures:

- o An established GLBT and Two-Spirit SEPM in each VA Medical Center co-located with an *AVER* chapter.
- o Establish an *AVER* Veterans Service Officer within each *AVER* chapter and an ancillary officer position at the National level.

Responsible Party: National and Chapter level Veterans Service Officer

Core Value: Social Justice and Devotion to Mission

- o Develop a specific outreach plan targeting the unique needs of each *AVER* chapter and their community

GOAL 5: Promote Service Member and Veteran Pride

- **Objective:** An empowered GLBT and Two-Spirit

service member and veteran community that can stand up and say “as a (GLBT or Two-Spirit) (service member or veteran) I...” to incorporate our military service experience and our sexual identity or gender identification in our daily lives.

Strategies:

- o Participate in the U.S. Library of Congress Veterans History Project.
- o Establish a designated Veterans History Project Coordinator within each *AVER* chapter.
- o Build *AVER* archive of taped interviews.
- o Chapters to strategically participate in local community events.
- o Establish an annual event sponsored by *AVER* to honor our fallen GLBT and Two-Spirit service members and veterans.
- o *AVER* Chapters to participate in National Coming Out Day – “Asking 1 million veterans to come out for the 65 thousand who cannot”. “Your boss and family already know that you’re gay – do they know you’re a veteran?”

Performance Measures:

- o Measure: 2 successful video taped interviews from each *AVER* chapter per year.

Responsible Parties: Vice
President of Veterans
Recognition

STEP 3 – BUILD: Getting *AVER* off the ground requires resources to build from. As a resource for GLBT and Two-Spirit service members and veterans, *AVER* will fulfill its mission and document its track record to establish new resources. As an organization and community, *AVER* will rise to new heights.

GOAL 6: Effective National Outreach and Market Penetration

Establish a Chapter Development Program and Membership Retention and Recruitment Program to grow *AVER* to a sound, stable, and reputable VSO.

Retention to sustain *AVER*'s membership

Recruitment to grow *AVER*'s membership base

Increase the number of chapters in strategic location to ensure maximum support and advocacy for *AVER*'s mission.

GOAL 7: Fulfill *AVER*'s Mission and Achieve Sustainable Growth

Strengthen organization structure and capacity to assure readiness to meet all mission challenges, while being flexible and innovative.

Develop a public trust in the openness of *AVER*'s business practices. Require all *AVER* board members to attend and actively participate in a semi-annual board meeting; all *AVER* membership is invited to attend.

Establish a viable Public Relations/Communications Officer. Issues regular press releases on issues related to *AVER*'s mission and the activities of *AVER*'s membership. Increased visibility of National Officers within each *AVER* Chapter. Develop an *AVER* Board travel schedule whereby each chapter is visited by a board member twice yearly.

Publish a quarterly national newsletter for *AVER*'s membership that includes budget summaries, outline of minutes, reports from each board member and each chapter, and open letters to the editor.

STEP 4 – RISE: Whether it's a new building under construction, or *AVER*, watching what you have helped build rise is the greatest reward of all! 🐾



VP of CHAPTER DEVELOPMENT

—David Guy-Gainer

We have added FOUR newly chartered chapters in Northeast Ohio, New Jersey, Fort Worth, and Fort Lauderdale. Our membership is now up to 416! We have 14 named targeted cities with focused action underway to charter chapters with another 10 cities to be named for our goal of chartering 24 new chapters in the next twelve months.

A teleconference was held in August with most Regional VPs in attendance. By early September our target list of 24 cities will be published and tactics finalized. Growth is possible and will happen! The responsibility for working with potential new chapters rests with the Regional VP and with an assigned "sponsor chapter."

With planned and concerted work, we expect our goal will be met and, given the exuberance of the RVPs, we predict that we'll exceed the goal!

Each new chapter is being asked to commit to a goal immediately upon being chartered. Fort Lauderdale has committed to having 100 members and has already grown to 30. In September we'll get to hear Fort Worth's goal.

REGION ONE VP

—Denny Meyer

Three chapters are pending formation in Region 1 in Rochester NY, Philadelphia PA, and in the Hudson River Valley counties north of New York City. Region 1 has begun expanded chapter development efforts in its Western Great Lakes sector, with the appointment of Deputy Region 1 VP Marie Bohush who has begun an extensive travel program of presentation from Erie PA to the Canadian border areas along the Lakes.

Particular commendation belongs to *BRAVER*, in Columbus Ohio, which has been a powerhouse of multiple ongoing activities, successful advocacy, launching a city *DADT* repeal resolution campaign, and local fundraising.

Newly formed *NEO AVER* has begun a unique program of multi-city chapter meetings to increase membership and participation in an initiative that promises to go a long way in achieving *AVER*'s growth goals.

REGION TWO VP

—Lara Ballard

At noon on July 23, 2005, Region II held its first-ever "Region II Conference Call," in lieu of an in-person conference (which will likely be a goal for Region II in the upcoming year). Present on the conference call were: Lara Ballard, *AVER* National Treasurer and outgoing Region II VP; Tony Smith, President, *AVER* National Capital Chapter; Jeff Cleghorn, President, *AVER Georgia* Chapter; and Mark LaFontaine, Treasurer, *AVER Florida Gold Coast Chapter*.

The group's first order of business was to elect Tony Smith as the new Region II VP. Tony, who is the Executive Director of the *Military Community Services Network* in addition to serving as the President of the *National Capital Chapter*, will be a tremendous asset to the *AVER* National Board as well as to Region II. 🐾

He ran unopposed for this position and was elected by unanimous consent of those on the conference call.

The group then discussed its plans for new chapter development within the region. Mark noted that the *Gold Coast Chapter* would be sharing a booth with another organization at *Gulf Coast Pride* in Jacksonville, Florida, on August 7.

Lara reported that she had registered *AVER* to staff a booth at Fredericksburg, Pride on August 27, paying for the \$100 registration out of pocket. Jeff discussed Savannah Pride and Columbus Pride, and expressed some doubt as to whether *AVER-Georgia* currently had the manpower to staff these events. Tony and Mark agreed to look into whether *AVER* members from other chapters could help out, and Mark noted that Savannah Pride is a very well organized event that draws in a military crowd.

Lara directed the chapter presidents to the “Grassroots Team Leaders” discussion board on the *AVER* BB site, pointing out that there is a now a list of key Congressional target districts organized by region, and that Region II should consult this list in developing its list of Prides to hit within the next year. Tony agreed to follow up with Dave Guy-Gainer, National VP and VP for Chapter Development, to find out how he wants Regional VPs to pick target cities for development in accordance with his “mystical formula,” unveiled at the National Convention. Tony also needs to establish whether Region II’s budget submission, due to the Budget Committee by August 15, should



reflect all new chapter development costs (Pride registration, travel costs, etc.), or whether such budget items will be submitted by the VP for Chapter Development.

Lara encouraged each chapter to come up with an annual strategy, and also emphasized that chapters needed to start identifying “Grassroots Team Leaders” within their chapters, as well as within key congressional districts. She said that Region II should be particularly on the lookout for constituents of Mark Foley (R-FL), Cynthia McKinney (D-GA), Jo Ann Davis (R-VA) (Fredericksburg/Yorktown area), and Thelma Drake (R-VA)(Hampton/Norfolk area). There are also two Congressmen in North Carolina, for whom it might be worth developing an *AVER* presence there. Jeff said that he has an *AVER-GA* member in McKinney’s district named Danny Ingram, and would send Lara Danny’s contact info. Mark said he had some contacts in Mark Foley’s district.

Finally, the group had a discussion, at Jeff’s request, about the future of the *Military Education Initiative*. All seemed to agree with Tony’s suggestion that the various different groups involved with the issue of gays in the military have a conference at some point, to discuss formalizing a relationship between the groups that better enables them all to work together towards common goals. 🖐

NATIONAL VETERANS COMING OUT DAY

—Marie Bohusch

During the National Convention, a good deal of brainstorming was accomplished for *National Veterans Coming Out Day*. All Chapters are encouraged to continue pursuing in-kind advertising donations for *National Veterans Coming Out Day* with their local and regional GLBT newspapers and newsletters, as well as lavender websites, and to pursue timely articles in the same.

The importance of the need for GLBT Veterans to come out to others in the GLBT community, as Veterans, was readdressed. We stand on a very unique threshold between both the GLBT community and the Veterans community, a threshold where we can increase tolerance and understanding on both sides.


In addition to coming out for ourselves lies the importance of coming out for those who still serve in silence. We stand a chance to make ourselves very visible at a time when real legislation is under consideration to lift the ban. The ongoing nature of *NVCOD* was underscored – this is *not* a one time event, but rather it will be an ongoing effort, picking up speed and weight year after year, just as current GLBT service members become GLBT Veterans every day, year after year.

In addition to organizing local Chapter based coming out activities, Lara Ballard presented the idea of encouraging veterans to use the military.com “Buddy Finder” (free of charge) to locate and come out to former military coworkers and superiors. “Coming out” to those who knew us to be upstanding service members can have a significant impact on the views of many who may not realize The Ban has had very direct impact upon those with whom they served.

Since the convention, Denny Meyer has suggested that each chapter work 🖐



to secure a city council resolution to recognize this first ever *National Veterans Coming Out Day*. Pursuing such resolutions is just as important as Coming Out on the individual level, as it forces our mission before the eyes of many people with whom we may not have any contact. Every resolution passed to denounce The Ban and to recognize those of us who served honorably brings the end of The Ban that much closer to reality. *NVCOD* is an opportunity to impress our honorable service and our plight upon the GLBT community, the Veterans community, and the populace at large.

For those who cannot devote time to *NVCOD* events or speaking engagements, smaller Coming Out efforts are suggested, such as the “gear” available through the *AVER Cafepress* web store, t-shirts, mugs, buttons, and such that can be easily added to any other *Coming Out Day* efforts. Information about *NVCOD* is readily available at the National *AVER* website as well as on the *AVERBB*, and further filibustering material can be directly obtained from Marie Bohusch, 2005 Chair – *National Veterans Coming Out Day*. 

Veterans History Project —Lara Ballard

On July 1, as part of the *AVER* National Convention, Zsa Zsa Gershick, award-winning author of “Gay Old Girls” and “Secret Service: Untold Stories of Lesbians in the Military,” teamed up with Lara Ballard, *AVER*’s Veterans History Project Coordinator, to teach a class on how to collect videotaped oral histories of GLBT veterans for the Veterans History Project.

The group was fortunate to have in the audience, in addition to Zsa Zsa (who holds a degree in documentary filmmaking), two student filmmakers from the University of Southern California who were able to chime in with their own tips on how to achieve the best lighting and sound for your

videotaped interviews.

The class included numerous excerpts from videotaped oral histories already collected for *AVER*, including submissions from WWII combat veteran and legendary gay activist Frank Kameny; Vietnam veteran Carol Riso (also featured in Zsa Zsa’s book *Secret Service*) Prof. Jay Hatheway, author of *Guilty as Charged: The True Story of a Gay Beret*, and many others.

Attendees were particularly impressed with the story of *AVER* member, Bronze Star recipient, and openly gay veteran Paul Jordan, who in 1944 gave up his rank of Master Sergeant in order to participate in the D-Day invasion of Normandy as a private, and who described the beach landing and assault on the Germans in vivid and unforgettable detail.

AVER’s 5-year strategy calls upon all *AVER* chapters to conduct at least 2 videotaped oral history interviews per year, for submission to the U.S. Library of Congress. All of the instructions provided at Lara and Zsa Zsa’s training session, and all of the forms required for submission to the Library of Congress, are available on the Library of Congress’ website at www.loc.gov/vets. The Library of Congress may also be able to arrange a private training session for your chapter, with a qualified professional oral historian certified by the Library of Congress as an instructor. In addition, if chapters would find it helpful to have on hand a copy of the DVD that Lara and Zsa Zsa used for their training session, Lara is willing to burn extra copies for you. Just e-mail her your mailing address at treasurer@aver.us

Questions? Comments?
Feel the need to
“Sound Off?”

E-mail your comments to
foeditor@aver.us

AVER WEBSITE

—Marie Bohusch

During the IT & Web Presentation at the National Convention, the proposal to migrate the National and Chapter websites to a dedicated server with the current web host was put forth. If the proposal is accepted, each chapter web administrator will be responsible for remaining in regular contact with the National IT & Web Development Committee.

For those who were unable to attend the National Convention IT & Web Presentation: Having a dedicated server would mean lower yearly web maintenance costs for pro-hosting space when split between National and the Chapters respectively. It will also allow for the launch of a full-scale Content Management Systems (CMS). The CMS suggested is Midgard, using the Aegir interface, which is fully “section508” compliant for disabled accessibility and licensed on an open source General Public License.

Employing a pro-level CMS will give National and each Chapter the ability to have several individuals designated to have access to update various portions of the respective websites with key administrators for final approvals, rather than placing top-to-bottom responsibility and workload on any one individual. It will also allow less experienced users to deliver professionally templated websites without need for extensive web-scripting/programming knowledge.

The Midgard CMS does include several basic templates for websites, including templates which generally follow the new *AVER* standard and are easily accessible through the Aegir interface. For server-joining fees to be announced once Chapters are polled, a basic website would be set up for any chapter.

The Aegir interface is extremely simple to use. The file explorer is set up liken to a Windows, Mac or Linux file explorer, and the data input interface is very liken to most current

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word-processing software such as MSWord, StarOffice or any current HTML capable email client. Most importantly, having a unified system with professional templates will raise the web-door of *AVER* up to the standards of other national GLBT organizations and VSO's, and it will provide built in web-apps such as polls, surveys and information lists that can provide vital feedback for our mission and efforts.

Once a website is created by the National webteam, each chapter will then be responsible for maintaining their own site, or securing the services of a web designer to maintain it for them.

James Apedaile, former *AVER* Webmaster, has volunteered to come aboard the IT & Web Development Committee as the *AVER* Systems Administrator should the dedicated server proposal be accepted. Marie Bohusch will continue to serve as the National *AVER* Web Developer, and if *AVER* migrates to a dedicated server – will also serve as primary site administrator for content contributions to www.aver.us. All *AVER* members are encouraged to join and regularly check the *AVERBB* at aver.us/averbb/, and Chapter webmasters are encouraged to join the IT & Web Development Committee as soon as possible. 🐼

MEMBERSHIP

—Jim Donovan

Since 1990, the membership has been \$25. however, it has become evident for some time that with the increased activity of our National Organization, that the \$25 membership fee can no longer pay the bills!

Printing costs for the brochures we supply to the chapters as well as the *Forward Observer* have skyrocketed, as has postage. National helps pay the costs to chapters for Pride Festivals and chapter formation. National Officers are required to do more traveling now in support of our chapters, and in the establishment of new ones, as well as travel to meetings with allied

organizations such as *SLDN*. We are honored to be included in the National Memorial Day ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery where we place a wreath at the Tomb of The Unknowns. Much of this travel is paid by the individual officer, but financial help from the organization is needed.

The Board of Directors, after much discussion, has reluctantly been forced to raise the membership fee to \$35.00, with \$25.00 going to National and \$10.00 remaining with the chapter. Renewal letters have been sent to those whose membership expires in Sept. '05. Please renew through your chapter if convenient, or mail your renewal to the National Membership office before 30 September if possible.

For those who may be on fixed income and have difficulty in meeting the \$35, we suggest that you discuss getting assistance from your chapter. In any event, no one will be denied membership in *AVER* due to lack of funds.

Never before has it been so vital for GLBT Veterans to take a stance and "Come Out." With the introduction of Rep. Meehan's (D-MA) Military Readiness Enhancement Act into the House (109thC HR 1059), America stands a chance to end sexuality based discrimination in the United States Uniformed Services. Equally vital is the task of raising GLBT awareness within the VA system. Many of our VA clinicians have little-to-no training concerning GLBT issues. For the sake of those who serve now, as well as those have served in the past, now is the time that we must stand united. The time to "Come Out" is now. You say that your boss and your bartender already know you are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, but do they know that you are also a U.S. Uniformed Service Veteran?

Please join us for National Veterans Coming Out Day! (NVCOD)

REGION FIVE VP

—Ray Allen, Deputy RVP

Region 5 has been very active. On behalf of Randy and Edward, thank you to all who attended the very productive convention this year in West Hollywood

Starting with L.A., as stated above, the Convention was a success, with a lot of hard work going into planning and running it. Ken and his partner Leo were absolutely the best with the decorating of the Awards Banquet, and coordinating of the firework show at the Hollywood Bowl. It really shows when the region pitches in.

Thank you Michael Kilmer on a great auction; I never thought I would see an auctioneer actually raise money without a visible product to auction off.

Palm Springs has been really busy also, with Randy Schecher and his group bringing up the funds and helping to sell the Hollywood Bowl tickets, and getting a large group to jump on a bus and make the trek to LA.

Speaking of California, things have been busy at the capitol. Hopefully, by the time everyone reads this, California will be the first state to go on record against *DADT*, with the help of *EQCA*, *MEI*, and all the chapters in California, including "honorary California chapter" New York and Denny Meyer, *SLDN* and the *Log Cabin Republicans*, (I hope I didn't leave anyone out) our bill is moving a foward.

Seattle. Wow, what a busy group, I don't know if there is a pride event in the Pacific Northwest they haven't been invited to attend. Way to go Julz and the rest of your group!

We are still pursuing Portland and gaining ground. With Jeremy at the helm I see it being charted soon. Spokane is also on the radar.

Our next targets are Honolulu Hawaii and Reno Nevada; capitol cities where we are establishing contacts.

Thanks to everyone in Region 5 for the hard work and dedication that is making this a region to be proud of.



SACRAMENTO VALLEY VETERANS

The year began with our annual *Canteen Show*, starring the incredible *Miss Richfield 1981*, the event bringing in 2k in one night.

The chapter has been working with Jim Maloney from *MEI* and *Equality California* on a resolution for California to come out against the *DADT* policy, because of the budget matters the resolution has been put off until after the summer break.

We teamed up with *AVER Puget Sound* to support Portland in their Pride event where we provided the Color Guard and operated a booth at the Pride festival on Saturday and Sunday.

Chapter president Ray Allen, who attended the National Convention, wishes to thank the *Veterans C.A.R.E* chapter on a great job.

In the works is our 2nd annual *GLBT Veteran Memorial Ceremony*, scheduled to take place at the state capitol, followed by a hosted BBQ and pool party to raise money for *AVER*.

We are holding our first Sac. Veteran Garage sale and exploring other avenues to bring in more chapter money.

We have a big push going on for *NVCOD*, we have our point of contact to coordinate with national and working on the best way to recruit people, teaming up with us will be *Equality California* and the *Lambda Center*.

Again congratulations to the new National Boardmembers, and to *Veterans C.A.R.E*, thank you for taking on the task of hosting the convention.

Ray Allen

President, *Sacramento Valley Veterans*

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www.sacvalleyveterans.com



☪ Sacramento Chapter Members at the Canteen Show, And with Chapter President Ray Allen Manning the Pride Booth ☪



☪ Chapter President Ray Allen Presides Over a Quiet Moment During The Recent GLBT Veterans Memorial ☪

**VETERANS C.A.R.E.
LOS ANGELES**

During the last three months the chapter's main focus has been on preparing for the 2005 *AVER* National Convention. The amount of volunteer time contributed by the members, and the *AVER* boardmembers across the country, rivals the time spent leading up to a L.A. Marathon.

Thanks to everyone who gave of their time and helped make the Convention a success.

Afterward, we found time to participate in the Long Beach L&G Pride Parade as the official Honor Guard. Thank you former Veterans C.A.R.E. Member and founder Mack Thomas, for bringing the beautiful flag poles to Long Beach.

Chapter members ended up staffing two booths at the CSW L.A. Pride Festival June 11-- 12, one for *Veterans C.A.R.E./AVER* and the other for CSW as the merchandizing, information and lost & found booth. The event kept us on our toes for two full days, but was well worth the effort as we managed to sell many tickets to the Hollywood Bowl/Fireworks fundraiser. Thanks to CSW's vendor chair, Cris Clarkin and the Board for giving us the opportunity to participate in that great festival at no cost.

Also thanks to the wedded couple, Ken Osborn and Leo Lerma, for preparing the promotion flyers and posters that made the ticket sales possible.

On June 23rd, Commander Westrick gave a presentation on the need to consider hiring GLBT employees to make a work force diverse, to employees at *Boeing Corporation, Long Beach*. Thanks you *GLBT Employees Group* for letting us be a part of their annual presentation, and for the \$ 500 donation to *AVER*.

Veterans C.A.R.E.
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**Veterans C.A.R.E Commander
Edward Westrick During a Quiet
Moment at the Awards
Banquet Saturday Evening**



SAN ANTONIO CHAPTER

It looks like Pride Month for San Antonio will be about six months long this year! The chapter again provided the color guard for the ever growing Pride parade in Austin. The following weekend we worked with *SLDN* at the Austin Pride Festival in capturing petition signatures and sticking hundreds of attendees.

After a Joey-Chitwood-like trip south to San Antonio, the group provided a color guard flag ceremony at a performance of the Alamo City Men's Chorale. During the Chorale's Salute to the Military, members of the chorale carried in the Chapter's Service Flags to each of the service songs followed by the posting of the colors and the singing of the National Anthem.

The chapter opened the San Antonio Pride Festival with a flag detail and staffed a booth in the 100 plus degree weather. Thanks to the several months

of volunteer work by Secretary/ Treasurer, Ron Clarke, the Chapter was the recipient of a check for \$500 from the festival committee.

While the Chapter President basked in the cool breezes in West Hollywood, the Chapter provided a color guard to lead the San Antonio Pride Parade another hot evening in wools for Robert Weeks and other members!

The Texas anti- gay marriage proposition is up for vote in November. The *San Antonio Chapter* is engaged as a supporter of the coalitions that have formed to fight this discriminatory proposition. By providing 800 hand held flags for the crowd to carry and the large color guard flags, the chapter assisted in the Coalition's March and Vigil in Austin.

Over 400 marchers surrounded the capitol building for a silent prayer all carrying US Flags. With a heat index of 113 degrees, Robert Weeks and Jenifer Newburn (David Guy-Gainer's Sister) carried the large flags in our shorts and *AVER* polos. (We are learning about heat and wool uniforms!)

Expect more news from this group as we continue to support the parades and coalition events through November. Without doubt, we spoke to more Veterans in this Pride season than ever before. New members have been added to both our San Antonio and Austin rolls.

David Guy-Gainer
San Antonio Chapter President
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The Crow's Nest
**AVER Wishes To Acknowledge The Following Contributors
To Our Sponsorship Program:**

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Anonymous
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Michael Todd Kilmer and Tim Breidigan
Captain Robert M. Rankin, M.D. U.S.N (ret.)
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William T. Winnewisser

Grunt (\$75.00)

Donna L. Groman
Fredric J. Mulvihill
Demetrio Munoz
Father Philip G. Salois, Ms.
Hank Thomas



CHICAGO CHAPTER

From Memorial Day to the Pride Parade, Chicago GLBT veterans have been on a virtual roller coaster ride. Activities included the City of Chicago's Memorial Day Parade down State St, the Memorial Day BBQ, the Remembrance Ceremony at Allen Schindler's grave, the 3rd Annual Salute to GLBT Veterans, the Annual Beer Bust & BBQ at Buck's Saloon, Zsa Zsa Gershick's *Serving in Silence* Book Signing, Pride Fest, and finally the City's 36th Annual Pride Parade.

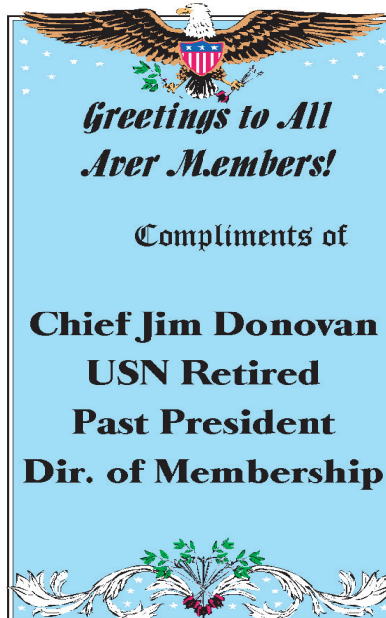
Our 3rd Annual *Salute to GLBT Veterans* was held in Daley Plaza at noon on Monday, June 6th. We were fortunate enough to have one of our WWII members, Ed Zasadil speak on that day, which is also D-Day. Ed, who is 80 years old gave a great speech. Other speakers included Dixon Osburn from Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN), Jean Albright, Chicago SLDN Liaison, Roy Dolgos, Director of Veterans Affairs for the State of Illinois, Will Schmutz, Director of Veterans Affairs for the City of Chicago, Bill Greaves, the Mayor's liaison to the GLBT community, Rev. Wayne Bradley, a rendition of WWII era songs performed by the *Chicago Gay Men's Chorus*, an incredible performance of *America, the Beautiful* by Chicago Chapter member Travis, Echo Taps provided by Mabel Pruet, and our traditional pink triangle wreath laying ceremony at the Eternal Flame, and to top it off, a proclamation from Mayor Daley officially proclaiming June 6, 2005 to be *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Veterans of America Day*

At the Pride Festival again we managed to mount a full Color Guard, and, thanks to the kindness of strangers, we were able to get 38 volunteers to carry our giant flag "GUS."

Since the Parade we've gone to City Hall to support Ald. Tunney's efforts to get the City Council to approve Cong. Meehan's Military Readiness Enhancement Act (MREA) to end

the DADT policy. We've participated in the City's *Supermarket of Veterans Benefits* at Navy Pier, attended the Tribute to WWII Veterans sponsored by the Department of Defense, where one of our WWII members was recognized. And we were invited to breakfast aboard HMCS (Her Majesty's Canadian Ship) Toronto which was tied up at Navy Pier for several days.

Jim Darby, President
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Chicago Chapter Members Gather for Mayor Daley's 3rd Annual Salute to GLBT Veterans. Phil, Bill, Jim, Jule, Ed, Travis, Ed (WWII), Travis, Ed, Rev. Bradley, Louis and Jean Place the Traditional GLBT Wreath at the Eternal Flame in Daley Plaza.



North East Ohio AVER has continued its precedent of meeting in three separate cities this summer. We had a terrific show at the Cleveland Pride Parade and Festival on 18 June, with resounding support from the Ohio weekly GLBT newspaper and Pride Committee. Two BRAVER officers joined us and helped carry the BRAVER 20-by-30 foot "GUS-2" American flag along with several other Clevelanders. They also stayed for the first half of the festival.

Because 9 angry men, including seven veterans, destroyed a rainbow flag at the steps of the Lakewood City Hall community flagpole during Pride Week 2003, the presence of the AVER banner and BRAVER's "GUS-2" at the front of our Pride Parade was of particular importance for our whole GLBT community. We had the honor of hosting Army SGT Robert Stout for the entire weekend.

During the festival, we were also visited by Marine veteran Tim Stallman, who is heading up the effort to form the Rochester Chapter of AVER.

At the Leather Stallion's After-Pride BBQ, many folks commented on our "Chicago" T-shirts, as they were worn by Marie Bohusch, Robert Stout, Tim Stallman, and the owner of the bar – a local Air Force veteran. This year we were invited to table at the Erie, PA Pride Picnic, and made several veteran contacts. We also hooked up with a local club owner who frequently opens his doors for fundraisers and benefit shows, and would like to help out the local GLBT veterans community in any way the club can be of assistance.

After the National Convention in

West Hollywood, Marie Bohusch and Robert Stout were invited to be Celebrity Grand Marshals for the Rochester Pride Parade on 16 July. We also manned an information table at their festival for the Rochester Chapter-in-formation, and attended other community events. While the festival was nearly rained out, not a drop of rain fell on the parade.

NEO AVER is currently working on developing its Unit Adoption Program for our soldiers currently serving overseas, and arranging various local benefits and coming-out activities for the fall with local community centers and bars, in addition to their regularly scheduled meetings and "veterans bar nights".

Marie Bohusch
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Since the prior publication of the *Forward Observer*, the BRAVER Chapter of Central Ohio has been very busy with several events. Starting in May (Armed Forces Month) the BRAVER Chapter had two main events:

On May 20, 2005, we joined the other many Veterans Service Organizations for the MIL/VETS Armed Forces Observance luncheon, which was held in the Villa Milan Restaurant here in Columbus, Ohio. Several High School Cadet Units, R.O.T.C. Units, Officers and Enlistedmen from Ohio's National Guard and Reservist Units were present with General Gregory S. Martin, Air Force Material Commander of the Wright-Patterson, AFB as the event's Guest Speaker. BRAVER was able to send a total of sixteen local representatives to this event which

included honored guests AVER National President, A.J. Rogue and NEO AVER Chapter President Ms. Marie Bohusch. This was a real accomplishment as last year we were only able to send two representatives.

On May 27, 2005, and for the second time in Central Ohio history, BRAVER participated in the Governor's Memorial Day Wreath laying ceremony on our statehouse grounds. Following the flyover of two F-16 fighter jets over the State Capital Building, honorable BRAVER members Larissa Hillyer, Rob Moses and Mike "Chief" Warner performed the honors of laying our VSO's Wreath on the Southside of Veterans Memorial Wall. Two others made up the BRAVER contingent and they were: Todd Shinkle, BRAVER President, and Gene Roark, Coordinator for Transgender Affairs. A luncheon followed shortly afterwards at the Union Station Restaurant.

June or "Pride Month" turned out to be at least as busy or even a busier month for BRAVER when compared to May.

On June 18th, 2005, two of BRAVER's Members, Gene Roark and Todd Shinkle, traveled to Cleveland to join NEO AVER President, Marie Bohusch, and Robert Stout who were leading Cleveland's Pride Parade. Following close behind the NEO AVER banner was the 20 foot by 30 foot "GUS-2" Flag; a proud moment for their city and Marie's newly chartered chapter. Congrats once more, Marie.

On June 25th, 2005, with scorching heat rising upwards to the high 90's, the BRAVER Chapter marched at the head of Columbus' Pride Parade with an actual Honor Guard of Flags — a first for any of Columbus Pride Parade — for which we received much praise and honors from the 100,000+ marchers and watchers in attendance. The BRAVER contingent for the parade made up of Larissa Hillyer, Robert Haas, Joe Miccio, Gene Roark, Todd Shinkle, Ron Willard, and Mike Warner.

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After the parade we had the pleasure of having our picture taken with Columbus' Mayor Mike Coleman, and we were literally the first organization to "kick off" this year pride festivities. Mike Warner, BRAVER Vice President, and Robert Stout said a few words about who they were as individuals, about our shared cause and accomplishments, and about who we were as a LGBTTsA Chapter of Veterans and Auxiliary Members.

Personally, I would like to say a very special sincere *thank you* to Chapter V.P. Mike Warner for making sure all those who were listening knew of my accomplishments as BRAVER's first President and one of its founding Members. Thank you, Mike, you did a great thing for me.

Independence Day found BRAVER members marching once again with "GUS-2," this time in this year's *Doo Dah Parade*. And once again we received many applauds and "Thank You's" for our service to our nation.

During all three of these months BRAVER participated in three separate "Home Bar Nights," one Fundraiser with the Centurions of Columbus and three Gallery Hops, which kept our chapter members very busy, indeed.

BRAVER stands for the Buckeye Region of American Veterans for Equal Rights and we are all very proud to be greater AVER's 14th Chapter. Salute! 

Todd Shinkle
BRAVER Chapter President
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braver.org



AVER NEW YORK

For the past year and a half, AVERNY has focused most of its political energy on getting the nation's first local DADT repeal resolution passed in the New York City Council. After much arm twisting, endless phone calling, and cheek kissing of politicians, the resolution passed through committee and a final resounding passage in the full council in mid May of this year. For the record, of 51 NYC Council Members, there were 3 NO votes from the 3 Republican council members, and one abstention from a Mr. Vallone; a Democrat who represents the conservative section of the City.

Aside from the work of AVERNY's chapter president, who at times made calls from his hospital bed, special thanks go to AVERNY's Legislative Liaison James Reilly (known as the Rottweiler) for his ability to confront politicians in City Hall.

Recent new AVERNY members include author Major Jeff McGowan and West Point Lt.Col. Allen Bishop, who wrote the *Army Times* article advocating lifting the ban on GLBT personnel serving openly in our armed forces.

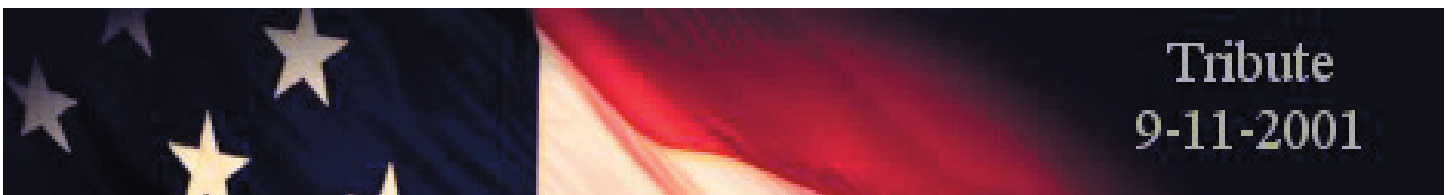
During AVERNY's annual Pride

Awards during Pride Month, Col. Bishop was awarded the *Leonard Matlovitch Freedom Award for Speaking Out at Risk*. Major McGowan was given the *Liberty Award for Literature*. NY City Council Member Alan Gerson, who had the courage to introduce the first DADT repeal resolution, was awarded the *Harvey Milk Democracy Award for Legislative Valor*.

Plans are under discussion, in the coming fiscal year, for the development of a Gay Veterans Monument to be placed in Battery Park, adjacent to Ground Zero in NYC. A local gay charitable organization proposed the idea to AVERNY. Government Land Use agency authorization is the first of a long list of hurdles and meetings yet to take place in the coming months.

AVERNY marched in this year's NYC Pride Parade in honor and memory of our first elected Vice President Bill Horne. World War II veteran William Horne, born in 1924, died during Pride Week on June 22, 2005 at age 81. Mr. Horne was a decorated out and proud veteran who served as a Navy radioman in the Pacific Theatre, where he participated in nearly every major naval campaign of the war aboard the destroyer USS Murray, including Saipan, Tarawa, Truk, Leyte Gulf, and Tinian. Having volunteered at the age of 17, Bill was able to vividly remember the horrors of naval battles nearly 60 years later, the bomb and torpedo explosions, the screams, blood, and death of shipmates. And after that, years after the guns were silenced, he recalled the onset of an enduring sadness in his soul that humans could do such things to each other.

Denny Meyer
President, AVERNY
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VP of VETERANS AFFAIRS

—Denny Meyer

AVER Veterans Affairs activities fall into three categories: Legislative, Individual Veterans Inquiry assistance, and Veterans Affairs Committee, who work in conjunction with *MCSN* to create a national network of social services for GLBT vets and active duty personnel.

Legislative work has focused on advocacy for HR 1059 the *DADT* repeal bill in congress and local *DADT* repeal resolutions, via media interviews, news releases, press conferences, speeches and participation in events with congressional representatives. In NYC we succeeded in passing the first *DADT* repeal resolution.

What was unexpected was that a national movement of *DADT* repeal resolutions would be spawned across the country. Resolutions have been passed in West Hollywood and San Francisco, and the California State Legislature is expected to pass one any day now.

Working groups are in various stages of preparation for *DADT* repeal resolutions in HI, FL, OH, and AZ. I have provided consultation via teleconference and e-mail with *DADT*-repeal-resolution working groups across the country. A *DADT* Repeal Resolution Coordinating group e-list is being formed; members of *DADT* Repeal Resolution working groups may contact Denny Meyer to join the group list: glbtvetsnyc@yahoo.com.

Individual GLBT veterans inquiries for assistance continue at a steady pace. Veterans with PTSD seek assistance for GLBT sensitive counseling. Others seek help in upgrading their discharges due to homosexuality. Couples write in seeking help in obtaining veterans benefits for their children in co-parent situations involving homophobic state and federal regulations.

A couple in New Jersey entitled to state and local homeowner tax breaks for veterans complained that after

AVERNY Chapter President Denny Meyer with New York Council Member Alan Gerson during New York City's Pride Parade.

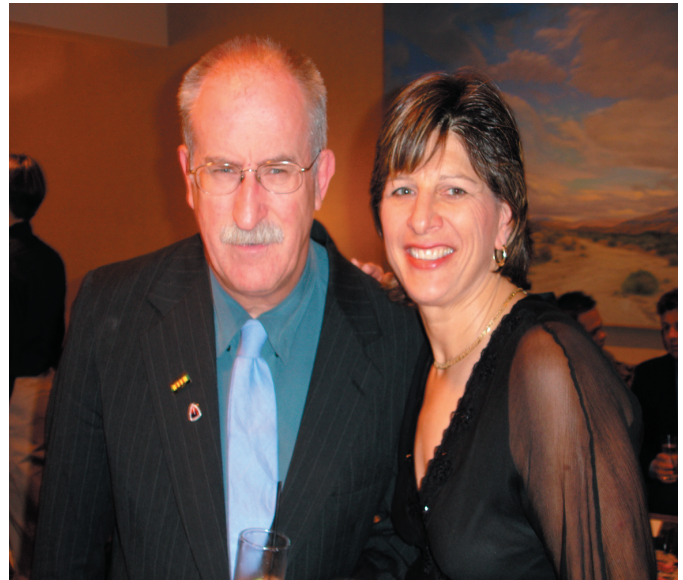
***AVERNY* Chapter President Denny Meyer Presenting the Following Awards at a Recent Ceremony in New York. (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT) Jim Reilly, *AVERNY* Legislative Liaison, Awarded the *AVERNY* Gay American Award for Community Service; NY Council Member Alan Gerson, Awarded the *AVERNY* Harvey Milk Democracy Award for Legislative Valor; Lt.Col Allen Bishop, Awarded the *AVERNY* Leonard Matlovich Freedom Award for Speaking out at Risk.**

Also awarded but not present in the picture is Major Jeff McGowan, who received the *AVERNY* Liberty Award for Literature.

Back row: Chapter Treasurer John Pulhamus, Member Claude Ashby, Vice President Joe Kennedy.



(CONTINUED ON PAGE 25)



⌚ (LEFT PHOTO TO RIGHT) **Jeff Key and Tom Carpenter
Ken Sholes and the Honorable
Donna L. Groman**

⌚ (L—R) **David Guy-Gainer,
John Ames, Paula Ridenour,
David Guy-Gainer, Lara Ballard,
Marie Bohusch**

⌚ (LEFT PHOTO TO RIGHT) **Robert Stout and David Guy-Gainer
Jim Darby and Robert Stout**



(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23)


registering as domestic partners with their state, a local official denied the veterans tax benefit; they were referred to the state Human Rights Commissioner and recently won their rights in a New Jersey State Court suite. Each of those and many other inquires sets of a new round of research and advocacy for our GLBT vets.

Veterans Affairs Committee:

In conjunction with Tony Smith and MCSN, the *AVER* Veterans Affairs Committee was begun, via internet, as a pilot project involving list members who are lawyers, social workers, psychologists and therapists, and others involved in direct service with GLBT vets.

Via the committee e-list, we have begun to be able to make referrals on a case by case basis to assist in individual cases. The intent is to be able to provide direct service and or reduced fee and funded social services for GLBT vets and active duty personnel. MCSN has begun a nationwide program with regional coordination to provide such services.

It is recommended that *AVER*, via chapter and regional donation efforts, fund MCSN's programs to provide services and assistance.

AVER leaders, at the chapter and national board level, are encouraged to join the Veterans Affairs Committee to coordinate *AVER* assistance to GLBT Vets, and as liaison and fundraising for MCSN's programs. Contact Denny Meyer at glbtvetsnyc@yahoo.com 



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Spring Issue

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Deadline for Ads/submissions 01 April

Summer Issue

Publication Date: 15 July

Deadline for Ads/submissions 01 July

Fall Issue

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Winter Issue

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FREDERICKSBURG PRIDE SEES ROLLOUT of *AVER*'S NEW GRASSROOTS STRATEGY

On August 27, Chris Mathis, Ray Ice and Lara Ballard of the *AVER DC* chapter spent the day working at a booth at Fredericksburg, Virginia Pride, about 50 miles from Washington, DC. One of the primary goals of the visit was to start gathering signatures on a petition to lobby local Congresswoman Jo Ann Davis (R-VA) to support HR.1059 (repealing "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"). Another goal was to recruit more *AVER DC* members out of the wider DC metro area and to build *AVER*'s visibility throughout the state of Virginia. The group succeeded on both counts, gathering nearly 200 signatures, as well as the names of 35 GLBT veterans. They left some blank petition forms with a local GLBT activist who is a former Marine drill sergeant, so that the effort to collect signatures can continue in the Fredericksburg area.

Chris and Lara both wore the *AVER* color guard uniform throughout the day, which they found was a great way of getting peoples' attention. Army veterans could quickly figure out that Chris and Lara were both ex-Army because of their service ribbons, and would strike up a conversation on that basis (meanwhile, Ray was reeling in the Navy vets with his USNA ball-cap, including one gentleman who sat in front of the booth for 20 minutes blowing up incredible balloon animals for all the passers-by). One woman approached the booth to sign the petition and gushed, "I really have to tell you that I dig women in uniforms." They were photographed and filmed throughout the day by local media, which provided an opportunity to talk about *AVER* and convince people to sign the petition. In addition, all of the visiting celebrities were more than happy to pose for pictures with the group.

That said, Lara was a little miffed when a visitor walking a large Weimeraner asked her if it was okay to bring dogs in. When she said she had no idea, he remarked, "Oh, I thought you were security, coming to bust me."

Chris and Lara were both caught off guard, one by one, when Romaine Patterson, the host of a talk show on Sirius satellite radio, pulled an Air Force coin from her pocket and said they owed her a drink if they couldn't produce a coin of their own. And the real high point of the afternoon was when

Chris convinced lesbian comedienne Suzanne Westenhoefer to pose for a picture. With Lara on the right of Suzanne and Chris on the left, Chris suddenly realized that, because she had no rainbow flag patch on her left shoulder, it would be better if Lara stood on the left, so she insisted that they switch places.

Upon observing all the shuffling around, Suzanne Westenhoefer (who is, after all, a comedienne), said, "Oh, what is this, some top/bottom thing?"

All in all it was a terrific day and we are optimistic about *AVER*'s growing presence in Virginia over the next year.

**editors note: Because of deadlines, we weren't able to include pictures in this issue. However, we've been promised pictures, which we'll gladly feature in the next issue of the FO.*



NATIONAL CAPITOL CHAPTER

The hot, hazy and humid days of Washington D.C. summers, coupled with vacation schedules, have left the National Capital Chapter quiet during the past few months. After the very busy Memorial Day and Pride Month events the chapter settled into a relaxed "recovery" period with some much-needed social events and down time. The monthly happy hours continue, albeit with lower attendance prior to our recent location change. We also scheduled two of the popular river tubing events on the Shenandoah River in Virginia. Other social events are to follow including a group dinner later this month. The chapter has also experienced some leadership changes with our Chapter Treasurer having to step down due to his new job requirements and schedule. We've found a new replacement to complete the treasurer office term, Ed Ramos, who is an invaluable member to the local chapter.

The Fall months will be busy with coordination on continuing our local strategic planning and collaboration with both Regional and National *AVER* leadership on many different issues.

These include grassroots lobbying for HR 1059, education outreach, advocacy and support for the veterans and active duty service members in our area, community outreach, and much more.

The National Capital Chapter continues to see new members coming into our organization and we hope to continue our membership growth over the next year.

Tony Smith

President, *National Capital Chapter*

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BULLETINS

There is a new support group formed for GLBT employees working in Baghdad, called the Association of Gays and Lesbians Assigned and Deployed — Baghdad (AGLAD-B). The group was set up by Tim Lunardi, a Diplomatic Security agent with the U.S. Department of State, and was mentioned in a news article recently in the *Washington Blade*, as well as the newsletter for the Gays and Lesbians in Foreign Affairs Agencies at

<http://www.glifaa.org>.

You can contact AGLAD-B at aglad_b@yahoo.com or join their Yahoo group at:

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/aglad_b

AVER NEEDS YOU!

Looking for a way to get involved? *AVER* could use your help on both a local and at the chapter level. On the local chapter level, we're looking for the following positions to be filled:

Public Affairs Officer
Veterans Affairs Officer
Fundraising Chair
Membership Chair

On the National level we're looking for people to join the following committees:

Public Affairs
(Includes public speaking and writing for the *FO*)

Grassroots
Fundraising
Budget

Contact your Chapter President or Regional VP to learn more!



Members of the recently-chartered *Florida Gold Coast Chapter* Proudly Display Both Their New Charter and New T-Shirts. With them is National President A.J. Rogue.

(BLUE SHIRT)

Holding the framed charter is Chapter President Mary O'Connor.

Florida Gold Coast Members line up for the local Pride Parade





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