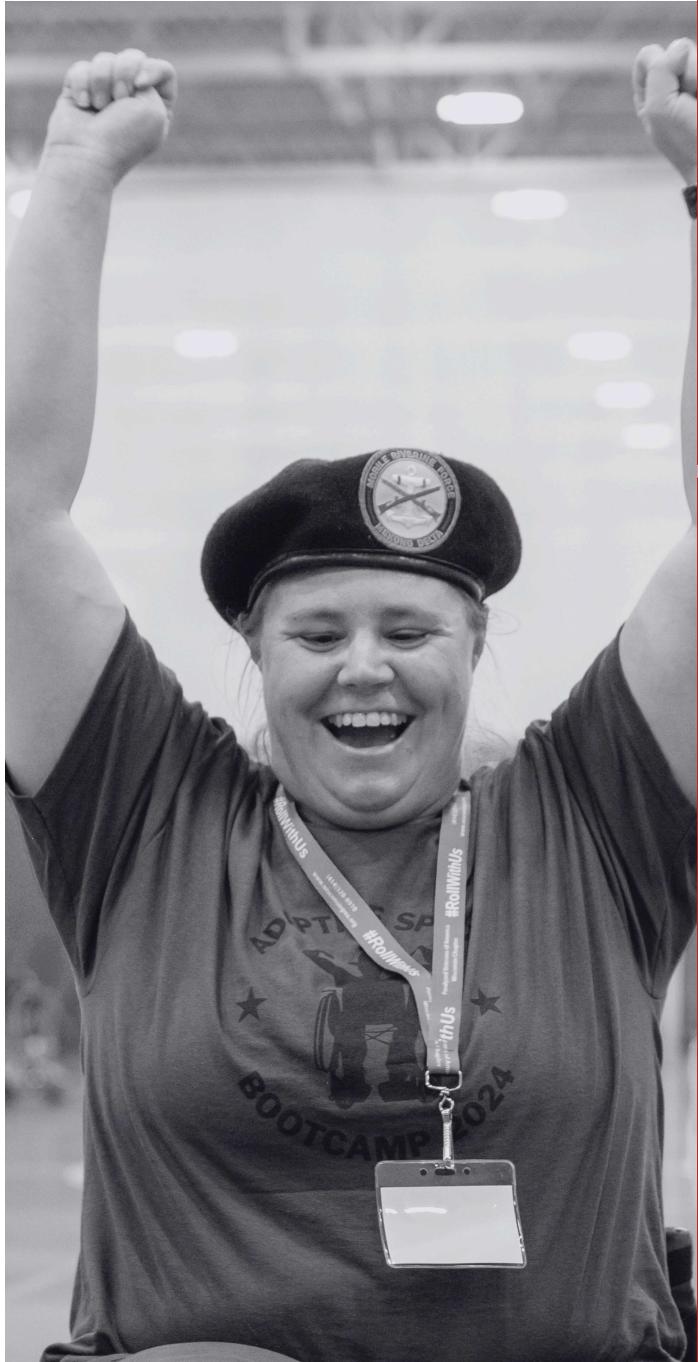




Wisconsin Chapter



# 2024

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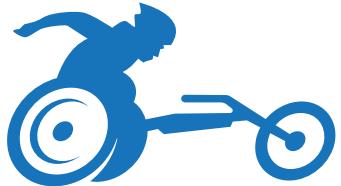
# Annual

# Report

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# About Us

The Paralyzed Veterans of America - Wisconsin Chapter (PVA-WI) aims to improve the quality of life for our American veterans and others with spinal cord injury, dysfunction, or disease through our programs: quality healthcare and access to benefits, adaptive sports and recreation, membership and outreach, advocacy and legislation, and research and education.



PVA-WI strategically collaborates with the Zablocki VA Medical Hospital Spinal Cord Injury Center to identify and address gaps while developing a course of action to continue to support the SCI Center and its external clinics in delivering exceptional results.

# Our Vision



To be the nation's leading advocate for veterans with spinal cord injuries and diseases, creating a future where all paralyzed veterans achieve maximum independence, enjoy full access to quality healthcare, and participate fully in society. Through innovative programs, dedicated advocacy, and unwavering support, we envision a barrier-free America where our heroes are empowered, respected, and integrated into every aspect of community life. Our commitment to advancing accessibility and inclusion for veterans paves the way for improved access and opportunities for all people living with disabilities in our communities.

# Our Objectives

- 1 To advocate for and monitor the delivery of high-quality and appropriate healthcare benefits and services.
- 2 To assist in identifying and securing veterans' benefits and other benefits for spinal cord injured and diseased veterans and others
- 3 To promote medical research to cure spinal cord dysfunction
- 4 To educate society on the attitudes and physical and legal barriers that confront persons with disabilities and to influence the removal of those barriers
- 5 To provide opportunities for health, promotion, recreation, employment, sports, services, and camaraderie for spinal cord injured veterans and others

# President's Report

As we reflect on 2024, PVA-WI has achieved remarkable growth and impact in serving Wisconsin's paralyzed veterans. Our success spans our five core areas: adaptive sports & recreation, advocacy & legislation, membership & outreach, quality healthcare & access to benefits, and research & education.

Our comprehensive support services continue to transform veterans' lives through personalized assistance, advocacy, and resource coordination. By taking a holistic approach to veteran care, we have helped members navigate complex systems, access essential services, and achieve greater independence in their daily lives. Our dedicated team's commitment to individualized support has strengthened our reputation as a trusted resource for our veterans and their families.

Our achievements are made possible through the dedication of our staff, volunteers, board members, donors, funders, and partners. Together, we can continue building a stronger, more inclusive Wisconsin for paralyzed veterans and their families.

With gratitude and optimism for the year ahead,



**Looking ahead to 2025, we are positioned to expand our impact through a comprehensive approach that recognizes the interconnected needs of veterans, their families, and caregivers. Our enhanced programming will focus on whole-family wellness, encompassing adaptive sports and recreation, financial education, comprehensive caregiver support, and peer mentorship - all working together to promote both mental and physical well-being. This integrated approach recognizes that the strongest outcomes emerge when we support not just the veteran but their entire support network.**



# Our Team

**Our organization's strength lies in its unique leadership structure - a Board of Directors comprised entirely of paralyzed veterans who bring firsthand understanding and lived experience to every decision we make. This veteran-led governance ensures our mission remains grounded in the real needs of our community while providing authentic advocacy and representation at every level of our organization. Our Vice President exemplifies this dedication through his service in multiple leadership roles both locally and nationally. At the same time, our Board's collective experience shapes our strategic direction and inspires innovative solutions to the challenges our members face.**

**Operating with a lean but mighty team of just two staff members - our Executive Director and Advancement and Engagement Coordinator - we demonstrate that our focused leadership and strategic partnerships can create an outsized impact. Our dedicated member peer mentors and vital partnership with our National Service Officer extend our reach and capabilities, while our efficient model allows us to maximize resources and maintain agility in delivering robust programs and services to Wisconsin's paralyzed veterans and their families. This success proves that significant change does not always require a large organization but rather dedicated people with a clear purpose.**

## Board of Directors

President, Todd Drazy

National Director, Vice President, Scott Griffith

Secretary, Gary Stott

Troy Kuczek, Co-Sports Director

Pete Carrao, Co-Sports Director

Angela Walker, Women's Point of Contact

Richard Buth

Michael Thomas



## Peer Support

- Ken Matthews, Peer Mentor
- Mark Rose, Multiple Sclerosis Point of Contact

## Office Staff

- Amera Schaefer, Executive Director
- Brenna Frey, Advancement & Engagement Coordinator

# ADAPTIVE SPORTS & RECREATION

The adaptive sports and recreation program achieved remarkable milestones in 2024, delivering 4,000 hours of therapeutic opportunities that transformed lives across our veteran community. Our presence at the National Veterans Wheelchair Games in New Orleans proved exceptional, with 17 PVA-WI members demonstrating outstanding athleticism and bringing home 40 medals across more than 20 diverse events. These achievements not only showcase our members' competitive spirit but also highlight the transformative power of adaptive sports.

Our 3rd Annual Adaptive Sports Bootcamp marked significant growth through strategic partnerships with GLASA, expanding our activity roster to include everything from boccia ball to adaptive cycling. The popular Salmon-A-Rama fishing tournament continued to foster camaraderie and outdoor adventure, with 22 members experiencing the thrill of Lake Michigan fishing across 11 charter boats. Our year-round programming has flourished, featuring bowling, boccia ball, air gun practice, and equine therapy through our innovative partnership with Milwaukee Urban Stables.

Expanding our adaptive fitness programs has yielded remarkable personal transformations among our members. Through structured training and dedicated coaching, participants have achieved life-changing results in their health and wellness journeys. Several members have reported significant weight loss ranging from 15 to 40 or more pounds, while others have experienced substantial gains in muscle mass and core strength. The comprehensive nature of our fitness programs has led to dramatic improvements in flexibility, balance, and endurance, enabling members to perform daily activities with greater ease and independence.

These fitness achievements extend beyond physical metrics. Members report increased energy levels and improved mental well-being. Our specialized equipment and tailored workout plans have allowed participants to build strength in ways they never thought possible. Some members who initially struggled with everyday movements now demonstrate remarkable independence in their daily activities. The program's success is particularly evident in the increasing number of members who have reduced their dependency on certain medications due to improved overall health.

The integration of nutrition education alongside physical training has created a holistic approach to wellness. Members have learned to make healthier dietary choices, leading to better blood pressure readings, improved glucose levels, and enhanced energy throughout the day. The community aspect of our fitness programs has fostered a supportive environment where members motivate each other, share success stories, and work together toward their health goals.

A notable highlight of this year has been the surge in participation by women veterans across our programs. Our women veterans have shown exceptional engagement in adaptive fitness and sports, bringing fresh energy and perspective to our community. A groundbreaking partnership with Underground Self-Defense enabled us to offer specialized self-defense courses tailored specifically for women with disabilities, empowering participants with practical skills and increased confidence. This innovative program addressed the unique challenges women veterans face while fostering a supportive environment for skill development and personal growth.

# ADVOCACY & LEGISLATION

The past year has been transformative for our advocacy initiatives, marked by landmark victories that will create lasting positive change for our community. Most notably, our persistent efforts culminated in the December 2023 passage of Assembly Bill 49, a watershed moment that eliminated burdensome parking fees for disabled parking across all University of Wisconsin System campuses. This achievement demonstrates the power of focused, strategic advocacy in removing barriers that impact our members' daily lives.

Our advocacy excellence received national recognition when Government Relations Director Scott Griffith was awarded the prestigious Richard Fuller Outstanding Achievement Award at the 78th Annual PVA National Convention. This honor not only celebrates Scott's unwavering dedication but also highlights our chapter's growing influence in advancing accessibility throughout the UW system.

The impact of our advocacy extends far beyond these visible achievements. Our team invested over 550 hours in direct advocacy work, building and strengthening crucial relationships with decision-makers. A pivotal meeting with WDVA Secretary James Bond provided an opportunity to address critical issues facing our members and explore innovative solutions. Our participation in the PVA Advocacy and Legislation seminar on Capitol Hill further strengthened our connections with Wisconsin's legislative leaders, establishing foundations for future collaborative efforts to benefit our community.

Our grassroots advocacy has also seen remarkable growth through our enhanced VoterVoice initiative. This program has successfully empowered an increasing number of veterans to engage directly with legislative processes, amplifying our collective voice in policy discussions. We're building a more robust and sustainable advocacy network across Wisconsin by equipping our members with the tools and knowledge to advocate effectively.

These combined efforts reflect our commitment to creating systemic change through strategic advocacy, relationship building, and community empowerment. As we look ahead, these strengthened partnerships and expanded advocacy capabilities position us to achieve an even more significant impact in advancing the rights and interests of our members.



# MEMBERSHIP & OUTREACH

Community engagement flourished this year through strategic partnerships and expanded programming. Our Annual Membership Banquet, supported by Waterstone Bank Foundation, Kunes Mobility, and Generac, united members and supporters to celebrate our shared mission. We distributed over 350 wellness lunches and emergency preparedness kits while continuing to increase our community outreach. Our holiday programs, made possible through collaborations with Prime Minister Catering and Kohl's Department Store, brought joy to veterans and their families. We re-designed our website to enhance accessibility and increase access to needed resources. Additionally, the success of our community initiatives, including participation in the Southeast Wisconsin Veteran Suicide Prevention Task Force and MS Walks across three locations, demonstrates our growing impact. This dedication to fostering an inclusive community earned us a national Membership Development Award for achieving the most significant percentage increase in new members within the PVA network.

Through strategic partnerships with corporations and foundations, we can continue to expand these vital programs and services, creating lasting positive change in the lives of disabled veterans across Wisconsin. Your support enables us to break down barriers, enhance accessibility, and improve the quality of life for those who have served our country. We can build a more inclusive and supportive community for paralyzed veterans and their families.

# RESEARCH & EDUCATION

Our dedication to advancing spinal cord injury care and support was exemplified through active participation in the 4th Annual Reeve Summit, where critical discussions focused on emergency preparedness, caregiver support, and healthcare accessibility improvements. Our scholarship program continues to invest in the future of healthcare, supporting students across various disciplines, including nursing, pre-medical studies, business administration, and biomedical engineering. Through a partnership with the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation, we've enhanced our clinical guidelines and disaster preparedness resources while supporting staff continuing education to ensure the highest quality of care for our veterans.

# QUALITY HEALTHCARE & ACCESS TO BENEFITS

In 2024, PVA-WI continued its unwavering commitment to enhancing healthcare access and benefits support for our veterans. Through the exceptional leadership of our National Service Officer, Brenda Stencil, who received distinguished recognition during the PVA Medical Services Site Visit, we successfully secured over \$4.5 million in earned benefits for our veterans. These vital resources supported adaptive housing modifications, vehicle adaptations, and essential medical equipment, directly improving the quality of life for our members. Our enhanced collaboration with Zablocki VA Medical Center's Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) Center has strengthened our ability to ensure comprehensive care coordination, resulting in better outcomes for the veterans we serve.

The synergistic partnership between our National Service Officer and the SCI Center has revolutionized our ability to serve veterans effectively. This strategic alliance has created a seamless support system that allows us to identify and address veterans' needs quickly and efficiently. Through daily collaboration and open communication channels, we have dramatically reduced response times to critical issues and enhanced our ability to navigate complex challenges. This relationship has become the cornerstone of our service delivery, enabling us to transform bureaucratic processes into swift, solution-focused actions that directly benefit our members.

# Financials

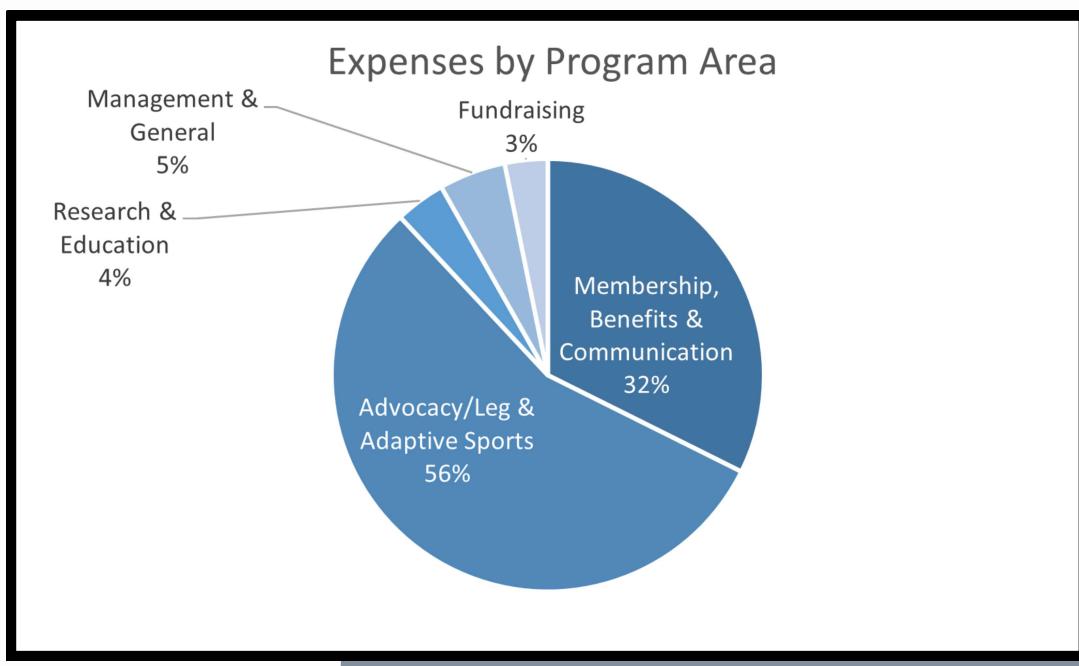
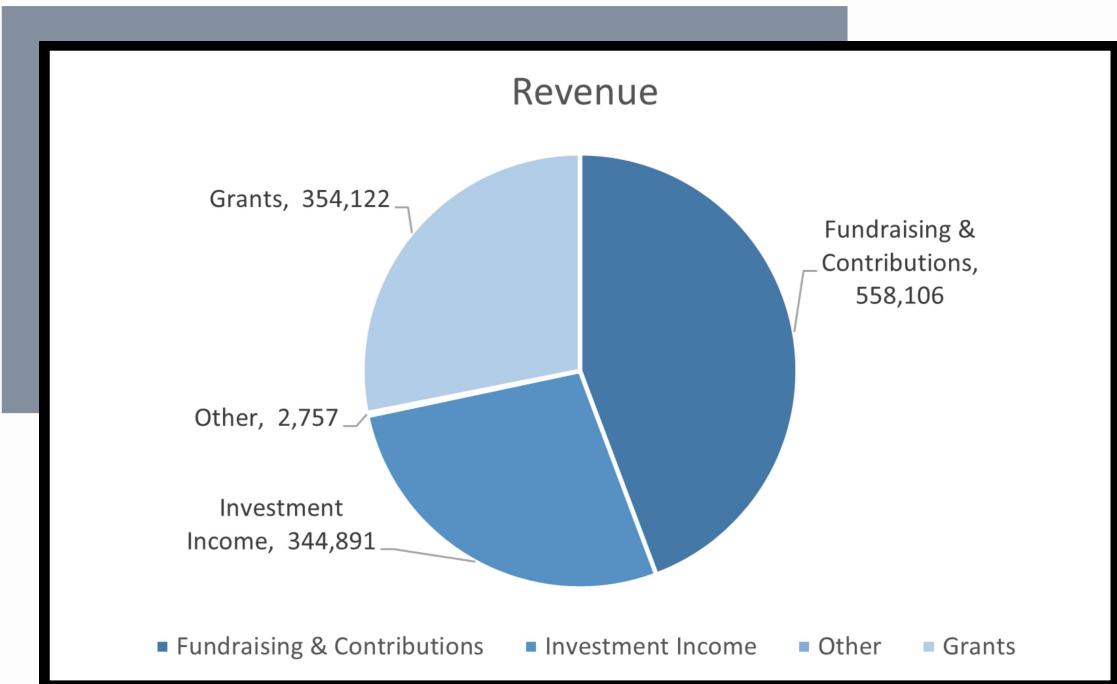
## Assets

CURRENT ASSETS	2024	2023
Cash & Equivalents	\$86,746	\$68,508
Other Receivables & Prepaid Expenses	\$775	\$775
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	\$87,520	\$69,283
PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT		
Office Furniture and Equipment	\$51,175	\$51,175
Less: Accumulated Depreciation	(51,175)	(51,175)
NET PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT	--	--
OTHER ASSETS		
Land Contracts Receivable	--	--
TOTAL OTHER ASSETS	--	--
INVESTMENTS	\$2,176,134	\$1,466,103
TOTAL	\$2,263,654	\$1,535,386

## Liabilities and Net Assets

CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Accounts Payable	\$10,015	--
Accrued Liabilities	\$4,472	\$4,389
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	\$14,486	\$4,389
NET ASSETS		
Without Donor Restrictions	\$2,249,168	\$1,530,997
TOTAL NET ASSETS	\$2,249,168	\$1,530,997
TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	\$2,263,654	\$1,535,386

# Financials



# Thank You

The transformative impact of PVA-WI's mission flows directly from the extraordinary generosity of our donor, funder, and volunteer community. Your steadfast support enables us to meet our members where they are, addressing the complex challenges they face in their journey toward an optimal quality of life.

Our members navigate a landscape of interconnected obstacles, each requiring thoughtful, comprehensive solutions. We've responded by developing forward-thinking programs that don't just address immediate needs but work proactively to create lasting, positive change. This strategic approach allows us to build foundations for success while remaining responsive to emerging challenges.

The heart of our work lies in our ability to evolve alongside our community's needs, ensuring that individuals with spinal cord injuries or diseases find support and a true sense of belonging. Each step forward in this vital mission is made possible by the trust and dedication of our donors, funders, volunteers, and community and corporate partners. For this, we are profoundly grateful.

SECURED \$4.5 MILLION IN EARNED BENEFITS



PROVIDED 4,000 HOURS IN SPORTS & RECREATIONAL THERAPY OPPORTUNITIES



SUPPLIED OVER 350 WELLNESS LUNCHES & EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS KITS



PERFORMED OVER 550 HOURS OF ADVOCACY AND LEGISLATION WORK



# Increase Our Impact

## Employee Matching

Does your employer have a matching gift program? Please check with your employer's human resources department for details. PVA-WI is happy to provide any other information your company may have to satisfy the requirements.



## Donor-Advised Funds

Using a charitable giving account is another powerful way to put your charitable dollars to work. This method eliminates capital gains on donated stocks. Use the DAF donation tool at [wisconsinpva.org/be-our-hero-and-make-difference-today](http://wisconsinpva.org/be-our-hero-and-make-difference-today).



## Legacy Society

Join our Legacy Society by making a bequest or other estate gift to assure the sustainability of our organization. Visit [www.wisconsinpva.org/planned-giving](http://www.wisconsinpva.org/planned-giving)



## Stock Donations

You can donate appreciated stocks, bonds, or mutual funds, which, upon transfer, would be tax deductible. Please consult your financial advisor and submit questions to [info@wisconsinpva.org](mailto:info@wisconsinpva.org)



## Shop for Good

Support our cause by purchasing Berres Brothers Coffee or helping hospitalized veterans at the Milwaukee VA Medical Center. Our carefully selected wish lists for veterans are available on Walmart and Amazon. Simply visit our donation page for direct links to start making a difference today.



## VoterVoice

Advocate for our members with their unique needs to ensure that Wisconsin is accessible for all! Join our advocacy team by visiting [votervoice.net/PVA/Campaigns](http://votervoice.net/PVA/Campaigns)

