BVA Happenings – November 6

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Around BVA

Happy Veterans Day 2026!



On behalf of the National Board of Directors and National Headquarters staff, **BVA Happenings** wishes all Association members and their families an uplifting and enjoyable Veterans Day this Wednesday, November 11. Wherever you may be and in whichever Veterans Day activities you choose to participate, we hope it is an enjoyable and uplifting day.

In the Washington, DC, area, the Veterans Day National Committee (VDNC), of which BVA is a member, will carry out the planned activities for the annual Veterans Day Observance at Arlington National Cemetery (ANC) and other related events. BVA National President Wade Davis will participate in an early morning Veterans Day breakfast arranged by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and, a couple of hours later, in the Presidential wreath-laying at ANC's Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. He will also be seated at the podium with dignitaries and leaders of other Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) at the subsequent ceremony.

A Parade of Colors will feature VSO flag bearers that include two BVA members. Formal addresses from the dignitaries and a VSO wreath laying, including a wreath from the Blinded Veterans Association, will follow. Army & Navy Union, host organization of this year's events, will host a VSO VIP reception following the cemetery observance.

In New York City, veterans with sight loss from several regions will participate in a Veterans Day celebration and adaptive cycling event. On Veterans Day, veterans will celebrate their military service by participating in the annual New York City parade. On the following day, November 12, participants will experience adaptive tandem cycling around New York City's iconic Central Park thanks to InTandem Cycling, an organization dedicated to making cycling accessible to individuals who are blind or have low vision through tandem cycling and inclusive recreational opportunities. A local restaurant has offered to donate lunch for

our group after cycling, giving participants a chance to relax, socialize, and share their experiences. Most of the group will spend nights at Navy New York City Lodging.

Check Out Nationwide Veterans Day Discounts

Although deemed by many as only a token of appreciation compared to all that America's veterans have sacrificed, an abundance of Veterans Day discounts throughout the country are available to BVA members this year. The lists of offerings, compiled and continuously updated by VA, include restaurants, retail and grocery outlets, personal care establishments (primarily haircuts and styling), car care businesses, and family attractions that include parks and recreation, museums, and other tourist attractions.

Some discounts are available only on Veterans Day while others are good throughout November. To access the list and the dozens of specific offers, click the button below. Return to the list periodically prior to Veterans Day to capture important updates.

2026 Veterans Day Discounts, Free Meals, and Other Retail Offers

Ahoy There! Register Now for 2027 Convention Cruise

Photo Caption: Royal Caribbean Oasis of the Seas, site of the BVA 81st National Convention



Registration is open for BVA members and their families who would like to attend the April 12-16, 2027, BVA 81st National Convention Cruise to the Bahamas aboard Royal Caribbean's **Oasis of the Seas**. Visit BVA.org under the Convention tab for cruise details and the registration link, or use the registration button below this article.

Important Registration Information

All attendees must register online to submit the required information securely. BVA staff can answer general questions but cannot register attendees. For registration questions and assistance, email bvacruise@landrykling.com during business hours, Monday-Friday, 9:00am-5:00pm Eastern Time. An agent will respond as quickly as possible. Please do not attempt to contact Royal Caribbean directly.

Within two weeks of registering, you will receive a confirmation email with your reservation/booking ID and instructions for completing required forms for special needs and guide dogs. A group rate for guests arriving Sunday, April 11, 2027, the night before

departure, is being finalized. Details will appear shortly in **BVA Happenings** and on the Convention webpage at BVA.org. Prepare to make waves with BVA in 2027!

Royal Caribbean's Oasis of the Seas Cruise to the Bahamas: Basic Schedule

- **Monday, April 12, 2027** – Leave Fort Lauderdale, Florida (Port Everglades) at 4:00pm; embarkation expected to begin around noon, and guests are required to be checked in and onboard the ship by 2:30pm (90 minutes prior to the scheduled departure time).
- **Tuesday, April 13** – Day at Sea/Cruising
- **Wednesday, April 14** – Nassau, Bahamas; 7:30am-5:30pm
- **Thursday, April 15** – Perfect Day at CocoCay, Bahamas; 7:30am-5:00pm
- **Friday, April 16** – Return to Fort Lauderdale, Florida (Port Everglades), by 6:00am, guests to disembark the ship between 7:00-9:00am (flights home should not depart prior to noon)

BVA National Convention 2027

Register for the National Convention

Join the Next Convention Town Hall on November 19

Mark your calendars for the next Board of Directors virtual Town Hall dedicated to the topic of the National Convention. The Town Hall is scheduled for Thursday, November 19, at 3:00pm Eastern Time. The session will cover key registration information, excursion and package updates, and the latest news about the Royal Caribbean Oasis of the Seas cruise. Click the button below to join the Zoom meeting.

Town Halls and Educational Series of November 19, 2026

This Week's Meta Glasses Distribution Schedule

Below are the upcoming events for Ray-Ban Meta Glasses Distribution. BVA staff members are not directly involved with these specific events, but BVA members are still welcome at each one. If you are unable to attend one of these events, you can still receive your glasses from BVA by mail. More information about each event can be found in the Word and PDF documents.

Mesa, AZ - November 7

- **Date:** Saturday, November 7
- **Time:** 12:00 - 2:00 pm
- **Location:** DoubleTree by Hilton Phoenix Mesa
- **Room:** Ocotillo Room

- **Address:** 1011 W Holmes Ave, Mesa, AZ 85210
- **Register**: https://tinyurl.com/vfwmetamesa

Pittsburgh, PA - November 9

- **Date**: Monday, November 9, 2026
- **Time**: 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM EDT
- **Location**: VisAbility
- **Address**: 1816 Locus street, Pittsburgh, PA 15219
- **Register**: https://acbmedia.org/glasses/request-form/

Branson, MO - November 10

- **Date:** Tuesday, November 10
- **Time:** 11:00 am to 4:00 pm
- **Location:** Mansion Theater
- **Address:** 189 Expressway Lane, Branson, MO
- **Register:** https://tinyurl.com/vfwmetamo

Fort Worth, TX - November 12

- **Date:** Wednesday, November 12
- **When:** 10:00 - 2:00 pm CT
- **Location:** VFW Post 10429
- **Address:** 1000 Stevens Drive, Benbrook, TX 76126
- **Register:** https://tinyurl.com/vfwmetafw

If you are a BVA member and are interested in receiving the Ray-Ban Meta AI glasses, or if you have applied to receive them via phone call or by applying through the BVA website, **no action is currently needed on your part.** You will be notified when we are getting ready to ship out your glasses.

Our tiny team is working to audit for fraud, receive shipments from Meta, and hand-pack each pair for shipping. We appreciate your understanding and patience.

It is not necessary to contact the BVA National Board of Directors, BVA National Headquarters, the Veterans Service Program's National Service Officers, or anyone at VA about the glasses.

BVA Gardening Guru Announces Fall Foliage Results, Interest Group to Return in Spring

Photo 1 Caption: Lisa Ehrlich, Florida Regional Group, shared first-place honors in the fall foliage context for her colorful autumn outdoor creation.



BVA members Lisa Ehrlich and Michaun Harrison are the co-winners of the BVA fall foliage display contest, initiated and carried out at the onset of the fall season by Gardening Interest Group Leader and BVA National Treasurer Monique Statham. The highlight of both entries was a striking diversity of color. Lisa's entry consisted of a friendly scarecrow display that included a guide dog, pumpkins, and colorful autumn leaves throughout. Michaun created a table centerpiece oriented to a Thanksgiving Day meal. See the accompanying photos.

In the end, there were only two first-place winners and no second- or third-place finishers. For their respective efforts and achievements, Lisa and Michaun will receive a package of five-gallon Grow Bags and a Solar LED Wind Chime.

Examples of materials that could be used in the display were fall flowers such as chrysanthemums, branches, acorns, pinecones, pumpkins, gourds, etc. The displays were judged on color blend and use of fall colors, sensory use of items that have different textures and smells, and overall creativity. Candidates created their displays and submitted their respective photos electronically.



By popular demand, the Gardening Interest Group will resume meeting at the onset of the spring season. Monique will announce shortly the date the sessions will begin and a complete schedule of days of the week and times they will be held.

Photo 2 Caption: Thanksgiving centerpiece display by Michaun Harrison, Mid-Atlantic Regional Group, garnered first-place honors for her as well.

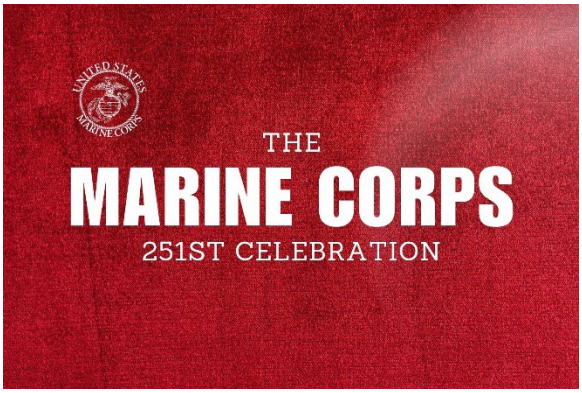
Adaptive Sports and Activities, VetTech to Honor Veterans Day with One-Time Hiatus

Both the Adaptive Sports and Activities Interest Group and VetTech will take a leave of absence next Tuesday and Wednesday, November 10 and 11, respectively. For the first time since VetTech's beginning four years ago, the scheduled session next week falls directly on Veterans Day.

Enjoy the special day at a Veterans Day community or national event, or at home comfortably with family and friends. Unless otherwise advised about a possible makeup session, the Adaptive Sports and Activities Interest Group will next meet on Tuesday, December 8, since it meets monthly. As a weekly meeting, VetTech will resume the Wednesday after next (November 18).

Marines Forever Celebrate USMC 251st Birthday This Tuesday

- The title of Marine never fades.
- Once a Marine, always a Marine.
- There is no such thing as a former Marine, an ex-Marine, or a retired Marine.
- No former Marines, only Marines.



At no other time of year are those creeds more openly exhibited than on November 10, the birthday of the U.S. Marine Corps. The birthday this year marks 251 years of service to the nation--even before the nation officially became a nation in 1775.

Marine Corps birthday events are accompanied by protocol pomp and circumstance, highlighted by a tradition that involves a ceremonial sword, a birthday cake, and a meaningful exchange between the oldest and youngest Marines in attendance.

Marine Corps birthday celebrations mark the November 10, 1775, date when the Second Continental Congress passed a resolution establishing two battalions of Marines during the American Revolution. While Marine Corps birthday celebrations take place around the world, one of the Corps' most recognizable traditions is the ceremonial cake cutting—and there's more to it than simply serving dessert.

The cake is traditionally cut with a Mameluke sword, a curved ceremonial sword associated with Marine Corps history. The sword serves as a reminder that Marines are a force committed to carrying arms so that the country can live in peace, according to the Corps' official cake-cutting ceremony script. The first piece of cake is presented to the guest of honor. The next piece goes to the oldest Marine present, who then passes it to the youngest Marine. This exchange represents "the transfer of wisdom, history, and the enduring brotherhood of the Corps to the next generation," according to Blue Star Families.

Although the Corps was founded in 1775, November 10 did not become its official annual birthday observance until 1921. That year, General John A. Lejeune issued Marine Corps Order Number 47, directing that the order be read to Marines every November 10 to commemorate the Corps' history and founding.

The birthday ball and cake-cutting ceremony developed over time. In 1952, Commandant General Lemuel C. Shepherd Jr. formalized the cake-cutting ceremony and other birthday observances.

This year's milestone anniversary will be marked this Tuesday with celebrations taking place at Marine installations and among Marine communities around the world. In Philadelphia, the city where the Corps was founded, a public birthday block party is scheduled at the future site of The Tun, with a cake-cutting ceremony planned for noon.

The Marine Corps Birthday is celebrated with several time-honored traditions that reinforce the bond between Marines past and present. Some of the key elements of the celebration include:

- Marine Corps Ball - A formal event held by Marines all over the world, the Marine Corps Ball is the highlight of the birthday celebrations. It includes a formal dinner, speeches, and dancing. The ball also features a ceremonial cake-cutting, where the oldest and youngest Marines present are honored by cutting the first pieces of cake, symbolizing the passing of tradition from one generation to the next.
- Commandant's Birthday Message - Each year, the Commandant of the Marine Corps delivers a special birthday message that reflects on the Corps' past accomplishments and its future challenges. This message is shared with Marines everywhere and is a focal point of the day. See the link to this year's message below.
- Parades and Ceremonies - Many military bases and Marine units hold parades or special ceremonies to mark the occasion. These often include readings of the Marine Corps' history, the playing of the Marines' Hymn, and tributes to fallen comrades.

- Veteran and Community Events - Marines, both current and former, gather in local communities for special events. These might range from informal get-togethers to more organized ceremonies, depending on where they are located.

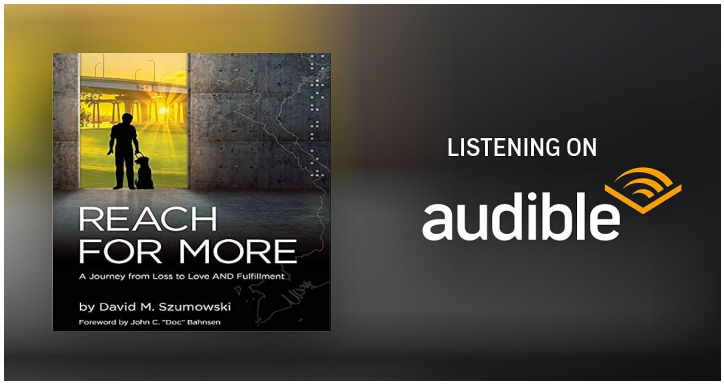
Birthday Message from General Eric M. Smith, U.S. Marine Corps, and Accompanying Video

November "Visions of BVA" Spotlights Achievements of BVA Past National President

Join the most recently produced episode of **Visions of BVA** in which podcast host Steve Baskis interviews David Szumowski – Vietnam War veteran, Past BVA National President, retired Southern California judge, and author of **Reach for More: A Journey from Loss to Love AND Fulfillment**, a memoir he published in 2019.

The November podcast became available last weekend. It can be accessed on all major platforms, most notably the Association's YouTube Channel, Apple Podcasts, and Spotify.

During the podcast, David reflects on his military service as a young Army tank commander in Vietnam, where he lost his eyesight in combat at age 23. He shares his experiences recovering from his injuries, adjusting to blindness, and completing rehabilitation at the Edward Hines Jr. VA Hospital. He also discusses the challenges and opportunities that shaped his path to a long list of professional accomplishments beginning with law school at the University of Denver, 12 years as a prosecutor, and 18 years as a judge.



David also expounds on his involvement and leadership with the Blinded Veterans Association, from attending his first national convention in New Haven, Connecticut, in 1980 to serving as National Secretary (1983-85), National Vice President (1985-87), National President (1987-89), Past National President (1989-91), and District Director (1991-95) elaborating on how the organization helped him reconnect with others following his injury. In 1998, David received BVA's highest honor at the time, the Melvin J. Maas Award for Professional Achievement.

Don’t miss this enlightening personal conversation between David and Steve on the themes of military service, resilience, leadership, and the importance of never losing hope or giving up on life.

Visions of BVA is a deep dive into the inspiring stories of the organization and its members, accounts of resilience, and the achievements of blind and low-vision veterans. Episodes feature interviews, discussions on life-changing technology, and a closer examination of the BVA community. Listeners and subscribers of the podcast are welcome and encouraged to leave their feedback and share their thoughts with Steve Baskis, sbaskis@bva.org, on any aspect of the podcast.

Graphic 2 Caption: National Library Service patrons can read David Szumowski’s *Reach for More: A Journey from Loss to Love AND Fulfillment* via Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD). The BARD book number is DB 99056. Narrated by Stephen Van Doren, the book is a read of 4:22 (four hours, twenty-two minutes).

National BVA Auxiliary to Hold Bimonthly Town Hall This Tuesday

Members of the Blinded Veterans Association Auxiliary (BVAA) will meet virtually via Zoom in the organization’s bimonthly Town Hall this Tuesday, November 10, at 8:00pm Eastern Time, BVAA National President Kenneth Witt announced earlier this week. Please plan to attend using the link below.

BVAA is comprised of family members and friends of veterans with sight loss. Its mission is to support these men, women, and families in any way possible—from securing health insurance to paying for education. The organization serves as a wealth of support and information to caregivers of all ages and relationships to America’s blind and low-vision veterans.

Join Zoom Meeting

District 3 Town Hall Set for November 17

Attention BVA members residing in District 3: A special Town Hall is scheduled for Tuesday, November 3, at 3:00pm Eastern Time, Director of District 3 Kenneth Mitchell announced this week. All BVA members in District 3 are invited and encouraged to attend the Town Hall, which is being coordinated and sponsored by the Florida Regional Group.

Join Zoom Meeting

Time: November 17, 2026, 3:00pm Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Meeting ID: 812 2129 3105

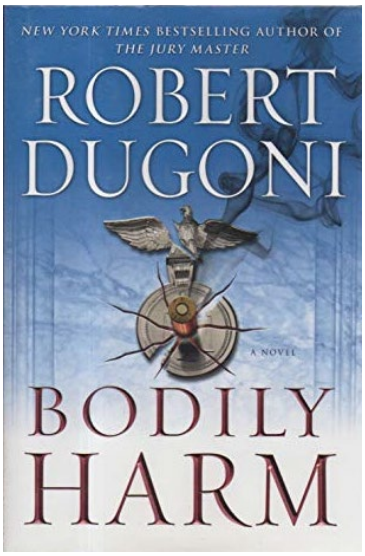
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Not Too Late Yet to Start Reading "Bodily Harm," Book Club Selection for November



BVA's Book Club Interest Group has selected **Bodily Harm** by Robert Dugoni to read during most of November until its next meeting on November 25. **Bodily Harm** is a pulse-pounding story of corporate greed, espionage, and the lengths one individual is willing to go for justice. The BARD number for Bodily Harm is DB 71305, and the total reading time is 12:20 (12 hours, 20 minutes). Narrating the book is the popular Dan John Miller.

Bodily Harm opens with a big win for David Sloane and his new partner, Tom Pendergrass, in a malpractice case centered on the death of a young child. But on the heels of this seeming victory, an unlikely character—toy designer Kyle Horgan—comes forward to tell Sloane that he's gotten it all wrong: Horgan is the one who is truly responsible for the little boy's death and possibly others—not the pediatrician Sloane has just proven guilty.

To get to the bottom of it all and find justice for the families harmed, Sloane must control his overwhelming desire for revenge. Full of nail-bitingly tense action scenes as well as edge-of-your-seat courtroom drama, reviewers say **Bodily Harm** finds Robert Dugoni at the very top of his game.

Book Club Interest Group meetings are open to all BVA members. New attendees are always welcome. While prior reading of the assigned book enhances the book club experience for all participants and makes for a livelier discussion, it is not a requirement to attend a meeting. The group will review **Bodily Harm** at its next meeting, scheduled for Thanksgiving Eve, Wednesday, November 25, at 7:00pm Eastern Time via Zoom. The link and other joining information for the meeting will be provided in future messaging as the November meeting draws closer.

Ambassadog Scoop Series Courtesy of Waymo

A Special Veterans Day Message from Ambassadog Martinez



This is Martinez, speaking on behalf of every BVA Ambassadog.

On Veterans Day, we honor the men and women who put their country before themselves. We may be new to the concept of salutes, but we recognize courage when we walk beside it. Some of you carried heavy loads far from home, and many carry them still. We notice. We are paying attention, because that is our whole job, and we take it as seriously as you took yours.

My handler, Cheri, served in the Air Force. I have the privilege of walking beside her, and every Ambassadog holds the same respect for the veterans we guide: your service did not end when the uniform came off, and neither does our admiration.

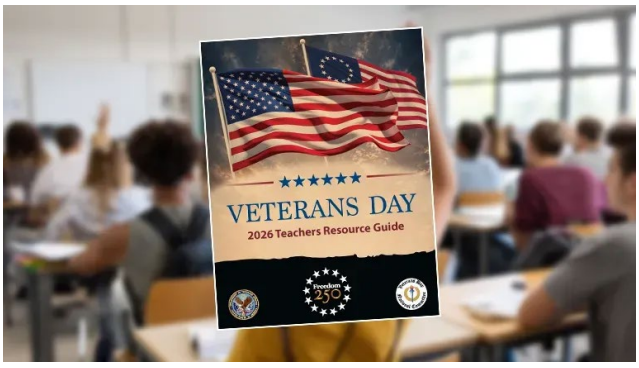
We have no medals, only harnesses. However, we do know a thing or two about keeping faithful watch over the ones we serve and never leaving a teammate's side. So, today we simply say thank you and honor your service.

If you wish to honor their service, stand with BVA, so that no blinded veteran ever walks alone. Please click the button below.

Donate to BVA Now

VA Insider

Veterans Day 2026 VDNC Teachers Resource Guide: A True Treasure Trove



VA and the Veterans Day National Committee (VDNC), of which BVA is an original member, have announced the release of the 2026 **Veterans Day Teachers Resource Guide**. The annual updated guide supports educators, youth leaders, and community organizations in teaching the history and significance of Veterans Day while honoring all who served. The online guide is a well-kept secret when it comes to materials about this unique day.

As America continues its commemoration of the Nation's 250th anniversary, this year's 32-page guide helps learners meaningfully connect with the values of service, sacrifice, and citizenship. It includes sections on understanding Veterans Day, how it originated, and how the day honors all veterans—past and present. It also contains classroom-ready lessons, student activities and projects, scholarship opportunities, guidance for school and community events, and flag etiquette and patriotic observances.

The 2026 edition can be utilized not only by schools, but also by youth-serving organizations, libraries, and community centers. These organizations help young people build understanding of service, citizenship, and American history. Learn more about the resource guide and then delve right into the guide itself by clicking on the buttons below.

Veterans Day Resources Guide Described

Access the Full Teachers Resource Guide Online

Pace Yourself to Achieve and Live Whole Health



It goes without saying that life in 2026 can be complicated. For all the planning that is done for a productive day or week, there are unexpected traffic tie-ups, a computer problem, an ill parent or child, a flat tire, a sudden power outage, a leaky kitchen faucet that keeps dripping even after O-rings are replaced, an inordinately long line at the post office, or visits to three different stores to finally find a needed item. The list of stressors is unending.

Because we often try to make life fit our schedule, we become frustrated and stressed instead of adjusting and pacing ourselves accordingly. Everyday problems, like construction or a slow line, can raise our blood pressure and tighten our muscles. We focus on what's obstructing our path instead of what is going well. We feel stressed by things that aren't really a threat at all but only a brief detour.

A practice of VA Whole Health is to loosen our grip on a rigid schedule and use one of many available stress-management techniques to help us mindfully return to the present moment. Click the button below for additional understanding of these techniques and to connect to an instructive video on one technique that stands out more than the others.

Loosen Your Grip, Pace Yourself, and Breathe!

Next Week's Events

Adaptive Sports and Activities Interest Group

Previously scheduled for November 10, 2026 (Tuesday), 7:00pm Eastern Time via Zoom; canceled for next week only.

The Adaptive Sports and Activities Interest Group will not meet this week due to Veterans Day commitments by many of the regular attendees and Interest Group Leader Anthony Woodson. Stay tuned for preliminary information about the next session on Tuesday, December 8.

VetTech and Educational Series

Previously scheduled for November 11, 2026 (Wednesday), 3:00pm Eastern Time via Zoom; canceled for next week only.

VetTech will not be held this week due to conflicting same-day Veterans Day activities for VetTech facilitators and several BVA members who regularly attend the sessions. VetTech will resume the following week. Stay tuned for preliminary information about the Wednesday, November 18 session.