

JOSEPH E. ANDRY
Past National Commander
Disabled American Veterans

Service to his fellow veterans has been the driving force of Joe Andry's life, both in his professional career and in his volunteer involvements. This veteran of the United States Army has achieved many things during the years since 1969 when he lost suffered severe combat wounds in Vietnam. But perhaps his highest honor came in 1990 when his fellow disabled veterans unanimously elected him as National Commander of the 1.2-million-member Disabled American Veterans (DAV).

Born in Cleveland, Mr. Andry was a star athlete at St. Joseph's High School – a member of the 1965 and 1966 State Cross-Country Champions and co-captain of the team in 1966. A premier mile runner, he carried a dream with him when he entered the Army in January 1969. He cherished the thought of competing as an Olympic team distance runner.

That dream came to an abrupt end on August 27, 1969 while Mr. Andry was walking point/flank for his platoon and his company during a movement in a free-fire zone. After a pause, the company moved out, and Mr. Andry felt a tug on his right boot as he tripped a landmine. An enormous explosion left a crater 15 feet wide and six feet deep. The blast took Mr. Andry's left leg and right eye, riddling his body with shrapnel. Yet he says, "It could have been worse." A smoke grenade on his chest stopped a piece of shrapnel that was flying toward his heart. Then, when the smoke grenade went off, it cauterized the stump of his leg, saving him from bleeding to death. A medic and another soldier worked feverishly to hold Mr. Andry's life together until a helicopter arrived, evacuating him to medical treatment. Over the next 32 hours, the young soldier went through several pints of blood as medical teams cleaned his wounds and got him stabilized for a flight to Camp Drake, Japan.

Everything was white when Mr. Andry woke up in Japan. He thought he was heaven, but reality wasn't long in arriving. Before making a phone call to his family in Cleveland, he asked about the extent of his wounds, and the news he received was serious. His upper and lower jaws were broken. His eardrums had burst. An eye had been removed. His right ulna was broken. The muscles in his right forearm had been torn loose. The shrapnel wounds were terrible; particularly severe were the injuries to his right leg. The doctors had amputated what was left of his left leg.

Yes, it was the end of those Olympic aspirations, but Mr. Andry is a man of strong faith and a powerfully positive attitude. That moment of truth, which could have been a tragic crisis and the ruin of another young person's life, marked a turning point. Joe Andry thanked God for the gift of his life, and began a new race to rebuild his life. And the life he built has been a great blessing to thousands of veterans in Ohio and across the United States.

There were many surgeries ahead for this young soldier, and plenty of hard, painful rehabilitation before he was medically retired from the armed forces. At Cleveland State University, Mr. Andry earned two degrees: a bachelor of arts in business and labor relations, as well as a bachelor of science in business education. He attained certification in secondary education in 1975. But the employment market was tough in the 1970s. In a weakened economy, jobs were few and far between. Discrimination against handicapped people, including disabled veterans, was a simple fact of life. And, like many veterans who came home sick and wounded from the Vietnam War, Mr. Andry face an uphill challenge lining up his first job.

He got his first break from the Cleveland Regional Office of the Veterans Administration, predecessor of today's U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). There, his work as a veterans' benefits counselor marked the beginning of a career devoted to serving other veterans. Today he works in Columbus as Director of the Veterans Services Division, Ohio Bureau of Employment Services.

Mr. Andry has never allowed his commitment to his fellow veterans to end with the close of an eight-hour day. While still in the hospital, he signed up as a life member of the Disabled American Veterans, and he became active in the organization right away. The DAV honored him as its National Outstanding Disabled Veteran of the Year in 1979. While serving as commander of his DAV Chapter, he became active in the DAV's Department of Ohio. Becoming commander of the state DAV organization in 1984-85, he quickly rose through the ranks of the DAV's national organization in the years that followed, being elected National Commander for 1990-91. A life member of DAV Chapter 142 and the DAV's National Amputation Chapter, Mr. Andry remains active in the veterans' movement today. His is a light that cannot be extinguished, a beacon in the lives of his fellow disabled veterans.

Following is a synopsis of Mr. Andry's life, work, and extensive involvement in the world of veterans' affairs.

MILITARY SERVICE

1969 - 1970 U.S. Army

- Advanced Individual Training (AIT), Fort Polk, Louisiana. Was acting platoon sergeant and supervised 90 men. Spent four months in Vietnam as point/flank man for his platoon and company.
- Wounded in action in Vietnam, sustained left leg amputation to the hip, removal of right eye and other conditions. Honorably discharged for medical reasons.
- Decorations and awards include the Purple Heart, Combat Infantry Badge, Air Medal, National Defense Ribbon w/ Device, Vietnam Service Medal, and Republic of Vietnam Campaign Ribbon w/ Device

EDUCATION

- Cleveland State University, Cleveland, Ohio. Bachelor of Science in Business Education, Certified in Secondary Education. Bachelor of Business Administration.
- A large number of professional and technical training programs.

PROFESSIONAL & LEADERSHIP CAREER

1994 - Present Director of Veterans Services Division, Ohio Bureau of Employment Services, Columbus, Ohio

- Directs entire operations of assigned division/program area on a statewide basis, implements assigned program and ensures compliance with applicable state & federal laws & agency rules, regulations, policies & procedures and supervises assigned staff.
- Develops and implements program changes to meet current needs and/or changes in state and federal law. Assists in drafting legislation related to veterans issues and programs. Outlines/defines goals, objectives and performance standards. Determines staffing needs and identifies staff from operating and support divisions that will be utilized during particular phases of projects/programs.
- Represents agency at meetings/seminars. Administers record keeping and reporting systems. Investigates and resolves internal and external complaints and/or grievances. Manages administrative budget for division. Authorizes payment of invoices. Prepares program reports and operates computer terminal to enter, retrieve, edit or verify data.
- Accomplishments:
 - Established Ohio Transitional Assistance Program (OTAP) for all veterans and their spouses. Since 1993, 6,900 veterans/spouses have completed the program with 3,800 placed within 90 days after completion of the OTAP.
 - Participated in U.S.DOL-VETS case management pilot program, which led to new nationwide policies and procedures to help eliminate employment barriers for veterans.

- Established “Hire A Veteran Month” with employer recognition events and job & information fairs held throughout Ohio. Veteran placements have increased each year.
- Initiated the Veterans Employment Representative on Campus (VEROC) Program to assist 3,000 disabled veterans in VA training with supportive services and employment during and after training. This program has been nominated for the Vice President’s Hammer Award and the VA’s Scissors Award for reinvention.
- Established and coordinates “Operation Coming Home.” Letters are sent all over the world to separating military personnel signed by the Governor and OBES Administrator. In addition, Labor Market Information and informational pamphlets are provided. Approximately 12,000 to 15,000 military personnel return to Ohio each year.
- OBES is one of eight states participating in a veterans alternative performance measures pilot program.
- OBES is one of five states participating in a pilot licensing/certification program for soon-to-be and recently separated veterans.

1988 - 1994 Executive Director, Adjutant and Treasurer, Disabled American Veterans, Department of Ohio

- Responsible for administrating and overseeing 128 chapters, 60,000 members, and an annual Department budget of up to \$750,000. Provided chapters ongoing technical assistance to conform to national organization bylaws and state and federal laws.
- Responsible for the planning and execution of the Annual Fall Conference and Annual State Convention, and other meetings throughout the year, *i.e.*, hotel, agenda speakers, receptions, etc.
- Established Annual Service Officer Training Seminar for Department and Chapter Service Officers, Hospital Service Coordinators, County Veterans’ Service Officers, and other parties interested in being taught and updated on veterans’ benefits.
- Advised and assisted veterans and their dependents in applying for benefits; helped solve conflict and problems with state and federal agencies; testified before state and federal lawmakers regarding veterans legislation.
- Spokesperson for the 60,000 members of the Ohio DAV, gave presentations and testimony for state and federal concerning disabled veterans’ initiatives and legislation to advance or enhance service and benefits. Keynote speaker at various events and functions in Ohio and the United States.
- Appointed by the Governor to serve on:
 - War Orphan Scholarship Board,
 - Chairman of the Ohio Veterans Plaza Steering Committee,
 - Governor’s Desert Shield/Storm Task Force,

- Governor's Improvement Task Force - Ohio Veterans Home Study Group, and
- Governor's Military Transitional Assistance Task Force – Technical Advisor for Employment Subcommittee
- In 1984-85, served as President of the Veterans Association of State Commanders and Adjutants (VASCA), with membership consisting of 14 congressionally chartered veteran's organizations, to address any issues and/or concerns regarding veterans and their dependents.
- Responsible for the coordination of Veterans Day at the Ohio State Fair program and events.
- President and co-founder of the Ohio Veterans Employment and Training (OVET) Council.
- Organization was instrumental in passage of HB 803, which granted veterans preference and priority with state agencies/organizations who receive federal monies for employment and training programs.
- Assisted in the establishment and expansion to the Great Lakes Regional VETS Council, which encompasses Federal Region V. This council works closely with OFCCP, OPM, and DOL-VETS at the regional and national level.
- DAV representative to rewrite Chapter 59 of the Ohio Revised Code - definitions and operations of the County Veteran Service Commissioners and Officers in providing services, benefits, and financial assistance to veterans and their dependents. Appointed by the Chairman of the Ohio House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees.

1991 - 1993 Chairman of the National Disabled American Veterans POW-MIA Advisory Committee

- Appointed by the National Commander to analyze and review documents and information regarding POW-MIA and make recommendations for the position of the DAV to the National Commander.
- Testified before the Senate Select Committee on POW-MIAs on behalf of DAV's position, concerns and direction to the Senate Select Committee should consider in resolving the POW-MIA situation since World War II.

1990 - 1991 National Commander of the Disabled American Veterans

- Represented DAV's 1.3 million members before the White House, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and Congress, including committees with oversight of veterans' programs under the Department of Labor and Veterans Affairs.
- Discussed issues and legislation affecting veterans with the President, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Secretary of the Departments of Labor, and other high-level government officials.

**1982 - 1988 Director of Veterans Employment and Training Services,
Department of Labor, Veterans Employment and Training Service
(DOL-VETS) Columbus, Ohio**

- Charged with ensuring effective and maximum job training, counseling, placement, and supportive services for eligible veterans.
- Implemented and integrated Veterans Reemployment Rights for veterans, reservists, and national guardsmen returning from active duty/training to be reemployed by their employers.
- Responsible for grant management of the Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) and Disabled Veteran Outreach Program Specialist (DVOPS), performance standards, Title IV-C, and administrative duties.
- Responsible for the Emergency Veterans Jobs Training Act, *i.e.*, public relations, organization and coordination, training, implementation, and follow-up with VA, OBES, SAA, BAT, and DOL-VETS.

1982 – 1984 Soldiers Relief Commissioner for Geauga County

- In a veterans' advocacy role, assured that needed assistance reached disadvantaged veterans.

**1979 - 1983 Assistant State Director for Veterans Employment and Training
Service (ASVET), Department of Labor, Veterans Employment and
Training Service, Cleveland, Ohio**

- Ensured effective and maximum job training, counseling, placement, and supportive services for eligible veterans.
- Conducted on-site evaluations of OBES administrative and/or operational aspects of priority of service for veterans.

**1975 - 1979 Veterans Benefits Specialist, Veterans Administration Regional
Office, Cleveland, Ohio**

- Assisted disabled veterans seeking education and/or jobs through VA's affirmative action programs. Coordinated efforts with the Ohio Bureau of Employment Services, National Alliance of Businessmen, CETA, and other agencies.
- EEO counselor - provided counseling service to employees or applicants who felt they were discriminated against. Investigated and effected informal practical solutions, and advised complainants of their rights under the complaint procedures. If in order, informed and identified the EEO officer of supervisory practices that could lead to discrimination.

- Advised and assisted veterans and their dependents on VA benefits and benefits available through other federal, state, and county agencies.

ORGANIZATIONAL, VOLUNTEER & CIVIC INVOLVEMENT

- Life Memberships in Veterans' Organizations Include:
 - Disabled American Veterans
 - AMVETS
 - American Legion
 - Military Order of the Purple Heart
 - Veterans of Foreign Wars
 - DAV National Amputation Chapter
 - National Order of Trench Rat
 - Italian American War Veterans
 - Regular Veterans Association
 - Kentucky Colonel
 - Non Commissioned Officers Association
- International Conference of Employment Security Agencies (ICESA). Member of the Veterans Affairs Committee and served on various committees. Served as ICESA liaison to the Assistant Secretary for Veterans Employment and Training Service, DOL-VETS.
- Member of the Past National Commanders Association.
- Member of the Society of the First Division.
- Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Support Dog Concept, Inc., 1987-1997.
- Appointed by Governor of Ohio to the Governor's Council on Disabled Persons, 1986-1987.
- Member of the Armed Forces Community Relations Board, 1984-1991.
- President of the Columbus Mayor's Advisory Council, 1984-1988.
- International Association of Personnel in Employment Security (IAPES). Service includes terms as Co-chairman of Veterans Affairs Committee; member of Ohio Executive Board; Ohio Chairman of Veterans Affairs Committee and international committee.
- Chairman of the Greater Cleveland American Red Cross Service to Military Families and Veterans in 1983-1984.
- Member of the 11th District Veterans Advisory Committee.
- Member of the VA and OBES Advisory Council.
- Member of Congressman Eckart's Military Academy Screening Board.
- Member of Veterans Administration Vietnam Veterans Civic Council, 1970-1980.

AWARDS, COMMENDATIONS, AND HONORS

- The 1997 and 1998 AMVETS Annual State Commander's Award for serving on the Legislative, Programs, VAVS/Veterans Welfare, and Veterans Employment Committees.
- Certificate of appreciation from the International Association of Personnel in Employment Security (IAPES) for participation in the educational and professional program at their annual fall conference.
- Certificate of appreciation in 1995 for exemplary service to the National Korean War Veterans Memorial.
- Certificate of appreciation for participation on the Ohio Job Net Improvement Team from OBES Administrator.
- Commendation letter from U.S.DOL-VETS for participation and expertise in a national case management pilot.
- Ohio AMVETS Department Commander's Distinguished Service certificate for distinguished services rendered to Ohio's veterans.
- Certificate of appreciation for participation in the educational and professional program at AMVETS annual fall conference.
- 1993 Citation from Governor for voluntary commitment to the Operations Improvement Task Force in the Study of the Ohio Veterans Home.
- Certificate of Award from the Association of Ex-POW's of the Korean War for outstanding service.
- Inducted into the Legion of Honor and received Bronze Medallion from the Chapel of Four Chaplains, Valley Forge, PA.
- Commendation from the Cleveland VARO for outstanding service.
- Honorary Lieutenant Colonel Aide-de-camp of Alabama State Militia, appointed by Alabama Governor.
- Certificate of appreciation from Secretary of Defense Richard Chaney for support of Operations in the Persian Gulf.
- Commendation from Governor of Ohio for serving on the Governor's Desert Shield/Storm Task Force.
- Selected by Cleveland State University as one of 25 1990 Outstanding Distinguished Graduates.
- Inducted into the Cleveland's St. Joseph High School Hall of Fame for outstanding contributions and accomplishments.
- Certificate of appreciation from Governor of Ohio for serving on Governor's Council on Disabled Persons.
- Award of Merit from Ohio Chapter of International Association of Personnel in Employment Security.

- Presidential Award as one of ten 1985 Outstanding Federal Handicapped Employees of the Year.
- Commendations for contributions to Congressman Eckart's Military Academy Screening Board.
- Recognition from William Plowden, Assistant Secretary for Veterans Employment and Training Service, for service to veterans.
- Citation from the Ohio House of Representatives as volunteer Chairman of the Services to Military Families and Veterans Advisory Committee of the American Red Cross.
- Outstanding Young Man of America in 1981.
- Commendation letter for VA Rehabilitation Task Force from U.S. Department of Labor, Veterans Employment and Training Service.
- Selected 1979 Outstanding Disabled Veteran of the Year for Ohio and for the nation by the Disabled American Veterans.
- Certificate from the Ohio House of Representatives as an Outstanding Ohio Citizen.
- Certificate for Outstanding Community Achievement from City of Cleveland.