“PVA has changed my life in so many ways. Since I was injured over 30 years ago, this organization has provided me tremendous opportunities to get into a lifestyle of dignity.”

Tom Wheaton grew up in the suburbs of Minneapolis. He decided to enlist in the U.S. Navy for many reasons, the most notable being that his grandfather and father served during World War II and the Vietnam War, respectively.

Wheaton began serving in the U.S. Navy in 1986 and is a plank owner (original crew member) of the USS Fort McHenry. In 1988, while on active duty in Perth, Australia, he sustained a spinal cord injury. After his initial treatment at the Royal Perth Rehabilitation Hospital, he was transferred to the Milwaukee VA Spinal Cord Injury Center.

In 1989, Wheaton became a member of the North Central Chapter of PVA in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. In 1993, he became a member of the then-new Minnesota Chapter of PVA, where Wheaton was the chapter’s first director of sports and recreation and also served as chapter treasurer. After moving to Golden, Colorado, Wheaton served on a regional level as sports director, treasurer, hospital liaison and executive director of the Mountain States Chapter of PVA. He also served as first vice president of the United Veterans Committee of Colorado.

For the last 23 years, Wheaton has served on PVA’s Executive Committee in various capacities, including as the organization’s senior vice president and parliamentarian. Serving alongside many dedicated leaders on the Executive Committee has had a profound effect on his life.

“Journeying together to determine how we can best assist in enhancing the lives of our nation’s heroes has been extremely rewarding,” Wheaton says.
Wheaton was re-elected national treasurer of PVA during the organization’s 74th Annual Convention, held virtually in May 2020, to begin a new, one-year term on July 1, 2020.

“This is a significant time for us to continue to push forward and prove just how unstoppable we are,” Wheaton adds.

In addition to his responsibilities at PVA, Wheaton has served on various national veterans and disability advisory committees, including the National Spinal Cord Injury Association. Whenever he has spare time, Wheaton enjoys doing puzzles, viewing them as a metaphor for facing life’s challenges and overcoming them.

Within his community, he is an elder of Hillside Community Church and co-leads its children’s ministries with his wife, Angela. The Wheatons have been married for 18 years and are proud parents of two school-age children.