



News Release

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BIENNIAL BRAIN INJURY CONFERENCE HONORED DEEDS, GALANTI

(RICHMOND, Va.) — Virginia Sen. Creigh Deeds and Paul Galanti, former commissioner of the Virginia Department of Veterans Services, were recognized for their commitment to helping people with brain injuries and their families at the biennial “Brain Injury Report Out Day” meeting.

The Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services and the Virginia Brain Injury Council on July 24 honored the two Virginians, whose work serves to improve the lives of individuals with acquired brain injuries.

The council chose Sen. Deeds as its recipient of the 2015 Brain Injury Champion award. Deeds has represented the 25th Senate District for the past 14 years after serving in the House of Delegates from 1992 until 2001.

“Sen. Deeds has continued to lead focused advocacy in the area of access to mental health supports and services,” said Virginia Brain Injury Council chairwoman Jodi Power. “By raising awareness of these issues in the Commonwealth, he created an atmosphere that allowed the brain injury community to join the statewide conversation on the critical topic of access to neurobehavioral treatment/services for Virginians with brain injury.”

The council advises the DARS on the needs of Virginians with brain injury and makes recommendations to its Commissioner regarding the development and delivery of brain injury services throughout the Commonwealth.

Galanti, a prisoner of war in Vietnam turned advocate for veterans, served as commissioner from 2010 to 2014. DARS Commissioner Jim Rothrock awarded him the DARS Toggle award, which was named after the “Doonesbury” comic strip character Leo “Toggle” DeLuca who suffered from a brain injury during his military service in Iraq.

Galanti led an expansion of the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program, a statewide delivery and response system for veterans, members of the National Guard and Reserves, and their families needing behavioral health, primary healthcare, rehabilitative services and community support. DARS is a collaborating agency on the program.

“Paul Galanti has a long history of courage and commitment to those who, like him, served our nation so well,” Rothrock said. “His leadership at the Virginia Department of Veteran Services was characterized by ongoing care for those who, like the ‘Doonesbury’ character ‘Toggle,’ defended our country and in so doing, left one or more of their faculties on the battlefield. Too many young Americans are making this sacrifice and Paul’s efforts have made our Commonwealth more capable of welcoming all ‘Toggles’ and supporting them and their families.”

Brandi Jancaitis, executive director for the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program, accepted the award on behalf of Galanti.

Catherine Wilson, who retired earlier this year as deputy secretary of the Department of Veterans Services, was given a certificate of appreciation.

The 2015 Brain Injury Report Out Day focused on access to neurobehavioral services for Virginians with brain injuries. Many of the presentations described recent efforts to develop these and other critically needed services and supports, including recommendations for possible next steps in the Commonwealth.

For more on DARS’ services related to brain injuries, visit www.vadrs.org/cbs/biscis.htm.

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The Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, in collaboration with community partners, provides and advocates for resources and services to improve the employment, quality of life, security, and independence of older Virginians, Virginians with disabilities, and their families. For more information, visit www.vadars.org.