

# 2016 Grantmakers In Health Conference to Feature IAVA

## **Paul Rieckhoff to lead plenary session on veterans health care challenges**

**SAN DIEGO (March 4, 2016)** – On Thursday, March 10, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) Founder and CEO Paul Rieckhoff will headline the plenary session at the Grantmakers In Health (GIH) Annual Conference on Health Philanthropy in San Diego. Rieckhoff's session will focus on IAVA's public awareness leadership on the topic of veterans health. He will also issue a national call to action to spur philanthropic support of veteran service organizations, explaining the moral imperative the nation has to give back to our veterans. Over the past two years IAVA has changed the national dialogue around veterans mental health, from leading the passage of the [Clay Hunt SAV Act](#), to leveraging its media presence to raise awareness and educate the American public on the issue.

"It is an honor to join the nation's preeminent thought leaders in the field of health," said Rieckhoff. "This year's theme of charting a new course is apt timing for IAVA. IAVA has been a pioneer for increased awareness of and support for veterans health over the last decade. We have worked tirelessly to engage stakeholders to develop the right strategies and solutions to meet the critical needs of our community. We survey our members annually and make an unprecedented effort to understand how mental health impacts their lives. This uniquely personal engagement allows IAVA to be the leading organization to advocate for innovative solutions that can improve and ultimately, save lives. We look forward to sharing our experiences and collaborating with other leading organizations."

With 1.8 million veterans, California is home to the largest veteran population of any state. In San Diego County alone, there are more than 236,000 veterans. IAVA recognizes the challenges and opportunities that exist for San Diego area veterans, and has dedicated staff based in California who provide a wide-range of support for the growing veteran community.

For nearly a decade, IAVA has led the national dialogue around improving veterans mental health. Launched in 2012, IAVA's [Rapid Response Referral Program \(RRRP\)](#) has helped more than 6,100 veterans and family members get on track in meeting their goals through connections to quality resources that include improving access to mental health care. In Feb. 2015, after an 18-month effort, the IAVA-led [Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans \(SAV\) Act](#) was signed into law by President Obama. The Clay Hunt SAV Act was designed to combat veteran suicide by increasing access to mental health care, boosting the accountability of mental health care and better meeting the demand for mental health care. Veterans mental health care and suicide prevention continues to be the [number one priority](#) for IAVA and the veteran community.

Rieckhoff's plenary session will be held on March 10, 10:00 – 11:00 a.m. at the Loews Coronado Bay in San Diego. Registration for the conference can be found [here](#).

Those not in attendance are encouraged to follow IAVA on social media during the conference using the hashtag #GIHac.

**About GIH**

[Grantmakers In Health \(GIH\)](#) is a nonprofit, educational organization dedicated to helping foundations and corporate giving programs improve the health of all people. Its mission is to foster communication and collaboration among grantmakers and others, and to help strengthen the grantmaking community's knowledge, skills and effectiveness.