

America's Veterans

Project Gemini Opens New Doors

(NAPSA)—It can be easier to cope with a situation if you talk to someone who shares your unique point of view—and that's especially important for blinded veterans. To reach out to other blinded veterans and their families, six U.S. Armed Forces veterans without sight recently traveled to the United Kingdom.

Project Gemini, a joint effort of the Blinded Veterans Association and St Dunstan's, took the veterans, four of them blinded in recent combat operations, across the Atlantic Ocean for six days of educational exchange and the sharing of friendship, knowledge and insights with their British comrades.

The project obtained its name from the transatlantic telecommunications cable that stretches from England to the United States. Project Gemini created an opportunity for blinded veterans to meet in a relaxed environment and, formally and informally, exchange ideas and views regarding the best ways to support veterans who have lost their sight.

Subjects of discussion were rehabilitation and readjustment training, vision research and adaptive technology for the blind.

"During the week, we shared helpful hints about coping with blindness and the 'war stories' that are part of the adjustment process," said Tom Zampieri, director of government relations at BVA. "We compared the British veterans' health care system with the American system operated by the Department of Veterans Af-



Blinded U.S. veterans shared friendship and insights with British comrades during week-long visit in the U.K.

fairs and its dozens of component medical centers, outpatient clinics and veterans homes throughout the country."

Project Gemini is an outgrowth of Operation Peer Support, a BVA program begun in 2006 that brings together veterans of recent conflicts with those who have lost their sight in Vietnam, Korea or during World War II. The program's objective is to provide Iraq and Afghanistan veterans and their families with examples of and opportunities to interact with men and women who have led happy and prosperous lives despite their blindness.

Chartered by the U.S. Congress in 1958, BVA links veterans with the services they've earned. Membership is open to all legally blinded veterans who have served in the U.S. military. Membership is not required for veterans to receive assistance, which is free of charge. For more information, call BVA at (800) 669-7079 or visit www.bva.org.