

AN INSPIRING TREK

THE ANNUAL BATAAN MEMORIAL DEATH MARCH CHALLENGE COMMEMORATES THE DEADLY FORCED MARCH OF FILIPINO AND AMERICAN CAPTIVES IN 1942— BUT IT CAN MEAN EVEN MORE. THIS YEAR, THE OVER TWENTY-SIX-MILE CHALLENGE ALONG NEW MEXICO'S HIGH DESERT TRAILS INCLUDED THE FIRST FIVE-PERSON BLINDED VETERAN TEAM. THESE MEN WERE ASSISTED BY OPERATION PEER SUPPORT, ONE OF THE MANY PROGRAMS THROUGH WHICH THE BLINDED VETERANS ASSOCIATION HELPS VETERANS WITH VISION PROBLEMS AND THEIR FAMILIES, REGARDLESS OF HOW THEIR BLINDNESS WAS ACQUIRED OR WHETHER THEY BELONG TO THE ORGANIZATION. THE BLIND MARCHERS HAD HELP FROM SIGHTED GUIDES. THEY ALSO USED A COMBINATION OF TREKKING POLES, WHITE CANES, AND A BLUETOOTH SPEAKER THAT PUMPED OUT MUSIC, WHICH ALLOWED EVERYONE TO ORIENT THEMSELVES WITH AUDIO CUES. AS ONE OF THE VETERANS PUT IT, BLINDNESS SHOULD NOT CAUSE YOUR LIFE TO STOP BUT PROVIDE YOU WITH THE CHANCE TO SOLVE PROBLEM SITUATIONS. TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OPERATION PEER SUPPORT AND OTHER BLINDED VETERANS ASSOCIATION PROGRAMS, GO TO B-V-A--DOT--ORG.