

SAFETY SENSE

White Cane Helps Veterans Take Important Steps Forward

(NAPSA)—If you see someone walking down the street with a white cane, you may wonder what significance the color holds. For many, the white cane symbolizes an important step forward toward independence.

The use of a white cane originated with artist James Biggs of Bristol, England. After an accident took his sight, Biggs readjusted his environment. Feeling threatened by the increasing amount of traffic near his home, he painted his walking stick white to make himself more visible to motorists.

His idea caught on in France and the U.S. In 1930, the Lions Club introduced the use of a white cane with a red band as a way to help the blind become more independently mobile. The white cane was quickly accepted as a way to identify the unique needs of the legally blind as they moved about on streets, on buses and trains and in restaurants, department stores and theaters.

One thing that many Americans may not know is that the concept of white cane safety is actually remembered and celebrated annually. A joint resolution in October 1964 proclaimed an annual White Cane Safety Day.

The Blinded Veterans Association (BVA), a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the welfare of blinded veterans and their families since 1945, is one of several organizations nationwide that view White Cane Day as an opportunity to educate the American public about important issues surrounding blindness, especially safety and mobility issues relating to recognition of and respect for the white cane.

Every day in the U.S., thousands of Americans with limited



Many Americans do not know that a day has been designated to remember and celebrate the importance of the white cane.

or no vision stand at busy intersections preparing to cross city streets and avenues filled with speeding motor vehicles, curb steps, uneven pavements and other physical obstacles. Among them are veterans of World War II, Korea, Vietnam and more-recent conflicts in the Middle East.

The white cane offers motorists and passing pedestrians a symbol to help them know to exercise extra caution and perhaps offer assistance.

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