

Ski Gram Newsletter

Tuesday March 29, 2011

25 Years: The Winter Sports Clinic... Then and Now

2011 marks the 25th consecutive year of the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic (NDVWSC), with nearly 400 Veteran athletes from 42 states (plus Puerto Rico) expected to participate, along with more than 600 volunteers and instructors. Even though this event has been in existence for a quarter of a century, for some participants, this will be their first time using adaptive equipment in winter sports. For others, this year is a chance to improve their skills, reunite with old friends and commemorate this remarkable achievement.

Founder and director, Sandy Trombetta, didn't set out to make the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic the huge success that it is today. As a recreation therapist at the VA Medical Center in Grand Junction, Colorado, he simply wanted to get a handful of Veterans up on the mountain so they could learn how to ski with disabilities. Back then, Trombetta's work with Veteran patients in nearby disabled ski programs proved to enhance their rehabilitation and the word spread. That handful turned into 100, and the number of participants has continued to increase since the event's inception.

Today, the Clinic has expanded into a much-anticipated national winter event for Veterans of all eras, both male and female, and of varying abilities. Trombetta remains an integral part of the planning and operations, as does Teresa Parks, the Clinic's director of operations, and the Grand Junction VA Medical Center which has remained as the host medical facility for 25 years.

So why do they come year after year? The Veterans say it's a combination of friendship, adventure and personal determination that lure them in. Adapting to the changes brought about by their disability, this Clinic gives Veterans the tools they need to enjoy an active lifestyle and participate in novel leisure activities. The week-long Clinic, jointly sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), offers Nordic and Alpine ski instruction as well as opportunities to rock climb, scuba dive, snowmobile, fly-fish and more. Educational courses, music, and social activities provide even more opportunities for participants to grow.

While the Clinic is designed to provide instruction, the alternative activities, and resulting fun, serve to enhance the Veterans' rehabilitation. Perhaps one of the greatest bonuses is the inspiration these Veterans offer to others in our Nation who face physical, psychological or emotional obstacles in their own lives. Having served our country and now overcoming personal challenges, the Veteran participants continue to demonstrate perseverance and courage as they tackle the defiance of the mountain. In doing so, they provide images of hope to countless others and proof that having a disability is not a roadblock to a life of freedom.

Clinton Hale

This air force veteran has attended each and every clinic for all of its twenty-five years.

For 25 years, the Disabled Veterans Winter Sport Clinic has been helping Veterans find adventure in the mountains of Colorado. And for 25 years, Clinton Hale has experienced it.

Hale has been a participant in the Winter Sports Clinic every year since its inception in 1987. "Early on it was just a few of us...maybe 50. Now, it's huge!" he says.

Hale makes the journey to Snowmass from Florida each year, eagerly waiting his turn to hit the slopes. He's learned a lot during the various Clinics, like the wisdom of waiting inside where it's warm instead of standing in line in the snow for his gear. When it comes to ski equipment, he prefers the monoski because "it looks cool," but for him, the trip to the mountain each year isn't just about the skiing.

“When I come here, I make it a goal to impart some of the lessons I’ve learned in life to some of the new guys,” he says. “And I learn from them, too. They know things that I’m still trying to figure out.” He certainly has some life lessons to offer. Hale entered the Air Force as a Combat Controller in 1966, and in 1983, he injured his back while on a training exercise. “Life has inherent risks. You just deal with them as they come.”

The Winter Sports Clinic has been a source of motivation and encouragement for him. “My first trip here, I learned that I can do anything that I set my mind to do.” For Hale, that means working, staying active, and helping to raise funds for his Florida team to come each year.

That also means skiing with a broken leg. “I broke it trying to ski on my own the first year that the Winter Sports Clinic was at Snowmass,” he says with a laugh. “They put a cast on it and I was skiing again the next day.”

The Winter Sports Clinic has seen many changes over the years. There have been great snow days and not so great snow days. Warm days and freezing days. And after 25 years, what’s the best thing about the Winter Sports Clinic? “The camaraderie,” says Hale without hesitation. “I have developed some great friendships. I love to see some of the old-timers and make new friends. It’s like a family here, it really is.” That’s what keeps Hale coming back, and what drives him to spread the word to other Veterans who are eligible to attend. His message to them is simple: “Get out here! You just don’t know what you’re missing. It’s the best event that VA has.”

Instructor Appreciation Party

Please join us tonight to honor the instructors who work so tirelessly to help our Veterans overcome some of their own challenges out on the mountain. Sure to be a great time, the Instructor Appreciation Party is from 8 - 11 p.m. in the Conference Center Ballroom.

Hazel Miller and her band will be there to provide the entertainment. Her voice has been called “stunning, moving and powerful.” The former Rocky Mountain News called her “a force of nature.”

Miller has been a much sought after performer in Colorado for the past 25 years. Whether she is singing blues, jazz, pop, or Gospel, her voice charges the songs with a primal dose of genuine soul and unfettered passion.

Miller began her 39-year career in Louisville, Ky., where she rose to the top of the music scene. She has since opened for world-renowned artists such as Mel Torme, James Brown, the Temptations, Earl Klugh and Bob James among many others.

Tonight, stop by to show your appreciation for your instructors and top off your hectic day with the one and only Hazel Miller.

TBI Support Group

This evening, from 6 to 8 p.m., there will an open session for any Veteran with brain injuries and their family members. The session will be moderated by Cheryl Lynch, mother of brain injury survivor Chris Lynch, and founder of American Veterans with Brain Injuries. This organization was founded in 2004 as a grassroots effort to share information and assist other service members and families who are dealing with brain injuries. This is the fifth year this peer support session has been held at the Winter Sports Clinic and the number of participants grow each year. Tonight’s session will be held in the Max Park Room, Wildwood Lodge.

What Are You Saying?

If you could be any cartoon character, which would YOU be?

Glenn McClary
US Marines

Jacksonville, NC

“That’s easy, I’m a lot like Bart Simpson since we’re both hopeless clowns.”

Paul Miosek

US Army

Glenville, NY

“I hope I’m like Sponge Bob, ‘cause he’s funny as hell!”

Lynn Mathers

US Air Force

Arlington, WA

“Sponge Bob...he gets away with everything, but then he makes everything all right.”

Evangaline Cohen-Douglas

US Army

St. Helena Island, SC

“Tazmanian Devil...outwardly calm and meek, but inside...I’m a badass!”

Evan Graves

US Navy

Kenton, OH

“I’d have to pick the Road Runner...I’m always being chased!”

Clinic Inspires DAV Leader

Disabled American Veterans (DAV) National Commander Wallace E. “Wally” Tyson witnessed his first “Miracles on a Mountainside” at the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic three years ago. He made the trip to Snowmass Village as a representative of the DAV Department of North Carolina, his home state’s department and a sponsor of the Clinic.

“I grew up in Florida, where skiing was something done behind a boat. I had never seen snow until I was 22,” Tyson said. “I’ve seen some world-class skiing during my travels with the Army, but I had never seen anything as amazing as this Clinic.”

That is high praise from someone who watched Olympic skiers training in Austria for the 1980 winter games.

“There is something about this Clinic that has a profound impact on not only the participants, but anyone who witnesses the athletes in action,” Tyson added.

Tyson, a service-connected, disabled Vietnam era veteran with more than 12 years service in the United States Army, was elected National Commander of the 1.2 million-member DAV at the organization’s 2010 National Convention in Atlanta, Ga.

National Commander Tyson is a life member of DAV Chapter 46, Fayetteville, N.C. He joined the DAV in 1985 following medical retirement as an Army sergeant first class and began his DAV service as a Chapter Service Officer and Chapter Adjutant.

Tyson said he is looking forward to interacting with all the participants this week. He feels they are a source of energy and inspiration.

The future of the DAV is also on Tyson’s mind, which is why he greeted every participant during registration and offered free trial memberships to those who are not signed up with DAV. Membership in the DAV not only benefits the individual veteran, said Tyson, but also helps ensure that all disabled veterans will have someone speaking out for them at the national level.

Like the Winter Sports Clinic, which has seen a large influx of veterans from the Gulf War and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the DAV is also looking to younger veterans for leadership.

“Every generation puts its own spin and brings its own unique energy to the DAV’s core mission of building better lives for America’s disabled veterans and their families,” Tyson said. “ I’m anxious and excited to see what our OIF and OEF-era veterans bring to the table.”

“This is their organization just as much as anyone else’s.”

Prosthetics Post

The Prosthetics Post is the place to get the answers for your most frequently asked prosthetics questions.

Dear PDP,

I use my manual wheelchair full-time. What happens if my wheelchair breaks?

Sincerely, Veteran on Wheels

Dear Veteran on Wheels: Veterans issued a manual wheelchair by the VA are eligible for a spare wheelchair and cushion. Additionally, Service-Connected Veterans issued a wheelchair by the VA will be provided a Prosthetic Service Card (PSC). The PSC provides emergency funding should your wheelchair need repairs after hours or on the weekends. Additionally, PSCs are also available to Veterans that have blind aids and/or braces, as well as artificial limbs. The intent of the PSC is to provide greater flexibility while the Veteran is traveling, and in the event something goes wrong with their device after hours. Please note that the PSC only covers minor repairs to the device listed on the card. Emergency repairs are paid, but the Veteran is responsible for contacting a Prosthetic Representative where they received their PSC. It is also a good idea for a Veteran to see their clinician in the event of a major malfunction to ensure proper assessment of the Veteran and his/her needs. Contact your local Prosthetic Representative for more information. www.prosthetics.va.gov/

MASSAGE

Complimentary massages are available, by appointment; from 1 - 4 p.m. and 6 - 9 p.m. Massage is located in the Elbert room in the Silvertree Hotel. Please call (970) 430-9373 to schedule an appointment.

WHEELCHAIR AND PROSTHETICS REPAIR

Located at the Host Room in the Conference Center.

Hours are:

6:30 a.m. - 8:45 a.m.

11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

4 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.

In between these hours this person (Don) can be reached @ 970-430-9417. Please do not call after 6 p.m. unless it is an emergency. If you need to contact the Prosthetics Repair person (Joe) please call 970-430-9415.

Medical Room

For emergencies dial 911

Medical room phone:

(970) 923-8330

Location

The medical room is located in the Bedford A conference room, one level below the mall, across the street from the Mountain Chalet Hotel. Stairway access from the mall is next to **Christy Sports**. Wheelchair access is by elevator at the far end of the mall above the bus terminal.

Transport

Van transport is available from the Silvertree Hotel to the medical room. Find the medical van in the front of the hotel or call the medical room to arrange transportation.

After Hours

Call the medical room for recorded instructions on how to contact the “on call” medical provider. If unsuccessful, call the hotel operator.

Menu

Today's Lunch

Hot Dogs, Hamburgers & Veggie Burgers
Vegetable Sticks with Ranch Dip
French Fries
Cottage Cheese

Today's Dinner

Coleslaw
BBQ Chicken & Rosemary Chicken
Beef Short Ribs
Corn Bread

Tomorrow's Breakfast

Fresh Sliced Fruit
Oatmeal with Granola, Raisins, Almonds, Bananas & Skim Milk Breakfast Scrambled Eggs
Croissants, Muffins and Biscuits
Biscuits & Gravy
Bacon
Ham
Breakfast Potatoes
Fresh Ground Coffee, Decaffeinated Coffee, Herbal Teas, and Assorted Chilled Juice

Transportation Schedule

Snowmobiling

First Trip	6:45 a.m.	7:15 a.m.
Second Trip	9 a.m.	9:30 a.m.

Please make sure to load at the correct time for your assigned trip.

Sled Hockey	7:45 a.m.	8:15 a.m.
Fly Fishing	8:30 a.m.	9 a.m.

Cross Country Skiing

First Trip	8:20 a.m.	8:45 a.m.
Second Trip	1 p.m.	1:30 p.m.

Buses will run up and down the mountain throughout the day. The 1 p.m. bus will pick up any participants from

Hot Springs	9:30 a.m.	10 a.m.
Shooting Sports	10 a.m.	10:30 a.m.
Aspen Gondola	10 a.m.	10:30 a.m.
Curling	12:45 p.m.	1 p.m.

Event Schedule

6 a.m. – 5 p.m.	Host Room: Conference Center
6:30 – 8:30 a.m.	Breakfast: Conference Center Ballroom

8 – 11:30 a.m.	Snowmobiling: T Lazy 7 Ranch
8:30 - 11:30 a.m.	Downhill Skiing: Bear Bottom, Head Wall, Lodge Pole
9:30 a.m. – 3 p.m.	Fly Fishing Float trip on the Crystal River: Carbondale
9:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.	Glenwood Springs Trip, Lunch at Elks Lodge, Hot Springs
9 a.m. – 3 p.m.	Cross Country Skiing, Snowshoeing, Biathlon Introduction, (Top of the Village); Elks BBQ Lunch at Top of the Village
9 – 11 a.m.	Scuba Diving: Silvertree Hotel Pool
9 – 11 a.m.	Sled Hockey: Lewis Ice Arena, Aspen
10 a.m. – Noon	Rock Climbing: Conference Center Circle
10:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.	Aspen Trip, Lunch at Elks Lodge, Mountain Gondola Ride
11:15 a.m. – 1 p.m.	Lunch: Conference Center Ballroom
11:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.	Shooting Sports/Archery: Basalt Trap Club
12:30 – 3:30 p.m.	Downhill Skiing: Baby Ruth, Showcase, Fast Draw
1 – 3 p.m.	Rock Climbing: Conference Center Circle
1:30 – 3 p.m.	CEU Educational Workshop: “A.H.A! =Active, Healthy, Alive!” Aspenwood Meeting Room, Fall Lane Presented by, Sophia Hurley, MSPT and Sue Diamond, RN MSN and Lynn Novorska, RD, LDN
1:30 – 3:30 p.m.	Curling: Aspen Ice Rink
2 – 4 p.m.	Scuba Diving: Silvertree Hotel Pool
4:15 – 5 p.m.	Ski Instructor Meeting: Eldorado Room, Silvertree Hotel
4:30 p.m.	Team Leader Meeting: Stone Bridge Inn, Council Room
5 p.m.	Coaches’ Meeting: Max Park Room, Wildwood Hotel
4:30 – 6 p.m.	Dinner: Conference Center Ballroom
6 – 8 p.m.	TBI Peer Support Meeting: Max Park Room, Wildwood Hotel
6 – 7:30 p.m.	CEU Educational Workshop: Fly Fishing, Camping and Hunting Aspenwood Meeting Room, Fall Lane Presented by, Matt Lucas CTRS
7:30 – 9 p.m.	CEU Educational Workshop: “Cross-Training to Success in the Workplace: Athletics and Work Go Hand in Hand” Aspenwood Meeting Room, Fall Lane Presented by, Urban Miyares
8 – 11 p.m.	Instructor Appreciation Party: Conference Center Ballroom Hazel Miller Band