



23RD NATIONAL VETERANS WHEELCHAIR GAMES ■ JULY 5-9, 2003

BREAKING NEWS

Long Beach, California

Issue 1

Saturday, July 5, 2003

The 23rd National Veterans Wheelchair Games Welcome—Bienvenidos—to Southern California!



Members of the Local Organizing Committee for the 23rd National Veterans Wheelchair Games.

On behalf of the Local Organizing Committee of the 23rd National Veterans Wheelchair Games, welcome to Long Beach! We've been expecting you all year!

Having previously served as host of the Games back in 1983 and 1989, we looked for support once again from some of our old friends as we prepared for this week's event. We are glad they came through for us again this year, and are also happy to have a

lot of new supporters this time around. We are truly honored to be hosting this event for the third time—one of only two VA medical centers in the nation ever to have done that.

We extend a special thanks to the City of Long Beach for opening up its arms and extending its special expertise and resources to us from the very beginning. The City's commitment to the success of these Games has enabled us to obtain the very best venues in our

area. We also give our heartfelt thanks to the veterans service organizations, particularly the California Paralyzed Veterans Association and Amvets, who not only extended their helping hands but also generously contributed to this year's fundraising efforts. The team of national Wheelchair Games officials from the Department of Veterans Affairs and Paralyzed Veterans of America were invaluable in offering us advice and support every step of the way as we planned this week's activities. In addition, our friends from Cleveland also gave us

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Kick Off the 2003 Games

Today, from 11-11:30 a.m., the Games Kick-off will take place outside the Convention Center by the Pine Avenue entrance, near the main entrance to the Hyatt. At the Kick-off, local officials will welcome the athletes to Long Beach, and a brief wheelchair basketball demonstration will follow, with star LA Clipper Lamar Odom as guest referee. Come out and cheer on your fellow athletes at this special event.

Welcome (cont.)

hands-on experience at their Games last year, and set a high standard for us to follow.

Lastly, I must recognize our local VA family, the 1,800 employees of our medical center and community clinics who contributed so much, either as a member of a committee or helping cover the workload of fellow employees involved in the planning. Hundreds of employees also helped by purchasing our memorabilia items, donating a recipe for our Wheelchair Games cookbook, supporting one of our many cook-offs, and volunteering to help during the Games. Kudos to you all!

Now, we offer what we hope will be the best Games ever and encourage you to keep “*pushing the limits*” in pursuit of your goals. Take pleasure in being in our area—and when the day is done, relax and enjoy! Feel the soft ocean breezes, observe the beauty and splendor of the harbor lights of the Queen Mary, and sample the

tastes and scents of our city by the sea. We are really very glad you’re here! -*Alice G. Martinez, Local Coordinator, 23rd National Veterans Wheelchair Games*

Opening Ceremonies Set for Tonight

Come one, come all to the gala Opening Ceremonies of the 23rd National Veterans Wheelchair Games, taking place tonight in the Long Beach Convention Center Arena. Athletes and coaches should plan to arrive around 5:30 p.m. to begin staging for the Procession of Athletes.

Competitors will be grouped by state in the hallway leading into the arena. Look for your state (or territory/national) signs while staging for the procession.

This year, local boy and girl scouts will help lead the athletes into the ceremony and will carry the state flags. Only athletes will sit on the main floor—family members, friends and guests will

be seated around the arena.

There’s lots planned for this evening, so get ready for an evening of fun and festivities. Following the ceremony, refreshments will be provided in Hall B. (Please remember to eat something before you come, as the food won’t be served until 9 p.m.)

Let the Games begin!

A Word to Our Veterans

Tonight, at the reception following the Opening Ceremonies, a very special 10-year-old boy named Evren Ozan will perform for our athletes and their guests. An extremely talented musician, Evren discovered a cedar flute on a family road trip and is now considered a Native American flute prodigy.

Wait ‘til you hear him—you’ll be amazed at the incredible talent he displays. Evren had this to say about why he’s here: “I would like to perform for the Veterans Wheelchair Games because I admire the veterans’ courage and determination. I respect what they’ve done for their country and I think that they are a great inspiration to all of us. I can’t completely express my feelings with words, but I hope my flute playing will convey all the emotion I have for these extraordinary human beings.”

In Memoriam

As you go through Classification today, you will undoubtedly miss seeing a friendly and familiar face there. We are sad to report that Janice S. Fincher, P.A., from the VA San Diego Healthcare System, passed away on April 6, 2003, at the conclusion of the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic in Snowmass, Colo.



Janice Fincher

Janice served as a national classifier at the National Veterans Wheelchair Games for many years, and served on the medical teams at both the Wheelchair Games and Winter Sports Clinic. These events were very special to Janice, who consistently performed a very tough job classifying athletes with great precision and steadfast compassion.

She was dedicated to quality care for spinal cord patients in both her professional and personal life, and she will be dearly missed. Janice is survived by her husband, Ken, and their 8-year-old son, Cody.

Shuttle Schedule for Today



Shuttles will run between the Hilton and the Convention Center today between 8 a.m. and 11 p.m.

• Today's Schedule •

9 a.m. – 4 p.m.	Games Registration & Expo	L.B. Convention Center
11 – 11:30 a.m.	Games Kick-Off	L.B. Convention Center
7 – 8:30 p.m.	Opening Ceremonies	L.B. Convention Center
8:30 p.m.	Welcome Reception	L.B. Convention Center

DME and Wheelchair Repair

Durable Medical Equipment (DME) rooms will be available at all hotels to pick up and drop off equipment. Wheelchair Repair will be located in the Westin Hotel only. If your wheelchair needs repair, you should go to the Westin Hotel. If the repair is an emergency or occurs after-hours, you should contact the Hotel Team Leader or the Co-Team Leader at the phone numbers listed below at each of the hotels. They will contact Wheelchair Repair to come to your hotel.

Athletes are reminded to bring your VA identification card in order to receive DME. There is a \$10 per equipment refundable deposit when you check out the equipment. Please inform the DME specialist when you pick up your equipment if you will need it dropped off at your hotel room. Athletes must let the DME staff know if you will be returning the equipment yourself, or if you will need to have it picked up from your room after the Games.

If your pick-up or delivery situation changes, please contact the Hotel Team Leader or Co-Team Leader. If no DME was requested for you, your name will be placed on a waiting list, and it will be issued on a first-come, first-served basis once all of the athletes who requested DME have picked it up. Exchanges for equipment can be made, but this will also be first-come, first-served.

You will be given your DME loan form at the time you pick up your equipment. Please bring this with you when you return the equipment and/or have it attached to the DME upon pickup. If the DME is not returned, a bill of sale will be created and mailed to the Team Coach. Once the DME is returned, the Hotel Team Leaders will mail the refundable deposit to you after the Games.

Hotel Co-Team Leaders: Hilton (Mediterranean, Pacific I/II Rooms) - Sue Kulvinskas (Cell phone: 562-244-8929); Westin (Tokyo, Vancouver, Shanghai Rooms) - Realean Maxwell (Cell phone: 562-244-8936)

DME Chair: Gina De Ocampo (Cell phone: 562-244-8906)

Medical Assistance

Hotels: A medical suite will be fully operational through Thursday at the Westin and Hilton Hotels. The rooms will be open from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. for treatment of minor injuries and illnesses. Look for signs to direct you to the medical suite, or call the hospitality desk for directions. After hours, a Games physician will be on call, and can be reached by calling the hotel operator. In the event of a life-threatening emergency, dial the hotel operator to call 911. There will not be a medical suite at the Hyatt; however, a Games physician will be on call each night. For services needed during the daytime hours, call or visit the medical suites at the Westin, Hilton, or Convention Center.

Convention Center: A medical room at the Convention Center will be staffed from 7 a.m. until the last event is completed each evening.

Games Sites: Medical staff will be present at each Games venue. They can easily be identified by their red T-shirts with the white cross on the back. The medical personnel can care for minor injuries. A severe injury/illness will be referred to the VA Long Beach Medical Center.

The medical staff will not be able to provide attendant care services, but have a list of agencies you may call if needed.

Hometown News at the Wheelchair Games

For many years at the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, the public affairs team has operated a “Hometown News” program to let your local newspapers know about your participation in this event. Now on the Games website, this effort generates an individual news release on any veteran who requests one, and makes it available to his or her local media.

For anyone who asked for a news release, we hope to have them posted on the website by the end of the week (see www.wheelchairgames.org, under “Athlete Information.”) We will also be taking digital photos of as many of you as

possible during the week, and plan to have the best photo of each veteran on the website by Wednesday. We also hope to provide one 4X6” print of that photo to you, along with a copy of your personal news release.

The website makes your news releases more readily available to local media in your area. Because the hometown news photos are now digital, however, we cannot provide the many duplicate prints from film like we used to.

We hope you have brought along your cameras so you can ask your friends (or Games volunteers) to take some action photos of you competing. If you forgot, there are

many stores in the area that sell inexpensive disposable cameras.

Don’t forget to check out the Games website when you get home so you can see your news release and photo. And please help us spread the word to the newspapers and other media back home about this great story—all about you!

Sign Up Today!

The Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress was created on Oct. 27, 2000, by a unanimous vote of Congress and seeks to collect and preserve recorded memories of America’s wartime veterans. The project collects audio- and video-recorded interviews, as well as letters, diaries, photographs, and other personal documents and preserves these stories of experience and service for future generations. Sign up at registration to record your story!

Onward Wheelchair Soldiers

Roll onward wheelchair soldiers into the light of day

For the battle we fight is not one of war but for the strength and courage to say

We are best at what we do, at home, at work, at play

We meet each challenge the best we can, the all American way

Let all the wheelchair soldiers, assembled here today

Summon up that strength and courage as we go out to play

The National Veterans Wheelchair Games is but one way we can say

We are the wheelchair soldiers and we are here to stay

Though our weapons be the shot-put, javelin and the disc

That each and every event we choose may hold a certain risk

It is with strength and courage that we do battle on this field

And carry the banner of sportsmanship as our golden shield

Let all the wheelchair soldiers assembled here today

Show the world, that we are the best at home, at work, at play

Roll onward wheelchair soldiers into the light of day...

Larry Binger
Athlete #1
Jan. 1, 2003

On the Menu ...



Regular meal service begins with breakfast tomorrow morning. Families and guests may purchase a full meal pass for \$185 at Pre-Registration and Registration/Expo. All meals will be served buffet style at the Convention Center unless otherwise specified. Breakfast will be served each day from 6 to 8:30 a.m., lunch from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., and dinner from 4:30 to 7 p.m. Bon appetit! Breakfast will also be served at the Hilton from 6:30 to 8 a.m.