



February 2006 Community Newsletter  
[www.wheelchairgames.org](http://www.wheelchairgames.org)

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**CHASING THE MIDNIGHT SUN:  
 COME TO ALASKA!**

*By Marcia Hoffman-DeVoe  
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Spectacular wildlife, breathtaking scenic beauty and 20-hour days are the backdrop for a once-in-a-lifetime experience in Anchorage, Alaska, at the 26<sup>th</sup> National Veterans Wheelchair Games, July 3-8, 2006. Excitement in the local community is already high as area residents eagerly prepare to share the spirit of Alaska with participants at the Games.

Athletic events will be held at venues throughout Anchorage. The outdoor events will allow participants and guests to drink in the beauty of the Chugach Mountains, one of six mountain ranges surrounding the city. On a clear day, Denali (Mt. McKinley) can be seen glistening majestically in the distance.

An extra day has been built into the 2006 Games schedule to give athletes and their families an opportunity to experience the wonders of Alaska, with a variety

of events planned to coincide with the Games.

The annual Fourth of July Parade, themed "The Price of Freedom," will be held in downtown Anchorage with plans for Games competitors to participate. Thousands of Alaskans turn out for this fun event, which includes an afternoon of entertainment, food and activities on the nearby Delaney Park Strip. In addition, the annual Sadler's Ultra Challenge 267-mile wheelchair and handcycle race will end in Anchorage on July 4th. Imagine being greeted by a crowd of fellow wheelchair athletes after participating in a grueling race course through the mountains and valleys between Fairbanks and Anchorage.

Anchorage is the largest city in Alaska and has a population of 270,000 encompassing 30 different neighborhoods. The community covers nearly 2,000 square miles—from Portage Glacier on the Turnagain Arm of Cook Inlet, to the historic Native village of Eklutna on the Knik

Arm. With natural wonders around every corner, visiting Alaska is an experience like no other.

Take a few days before or after the Games to really experience the Last Frontier. Plan a fishing trip, ride the Alaska Railroad, take a glacier cruise or pan for gold. With great local interest in arts and culture, Anchorage is home to several first class museums featuring Alaska history, wildlife exhibits, aviation and Native fine arts. There are many scrumptious dining establishments, with local seafood taking center stage. (Wild Alaska salmon is a special delicacy.) Shop for gifts such as ivory carvings, Native crafts, furs, jade products and luxurious qiviut accessories.

Explore the Anchorage Convention and Visitors Bureau Web site, [www.Anchorage.net](http://www.Anchorage.net), to request a free Official Anchorage Visitor's Guide, preview sample itineraries, and link to trip-planning tools. Get "Wild About Anchorage!" Don't miss the 26<sup>th</sup> National Veterans Wheelchair Games!



Ever ride on a dog sled? Ever been eye to eye with a bald eagle? Ever watch quad rugby and thought, "Could I do that?" (Murderball records predicted to be shattered in Anchorage!) Ever wonder what the Iditarod and the Wheelchair Games have in common? Ever been cheered on by 20,000 spectators? Don't miss the 26th National Veterans Wheelchair Games!

## Alaska Athlete Don Peters: Finding Family at the Wheelchair Games

An athlete, small business owner, linguist, community leader, martial artist, father and friend—those are just a few of the many hats worn by Don Peters, 37, of Anchorage, Alaska. In all roles, Peters, a U.S. Army veteran, has a unique perspective.

"For us to be better humans, it is our responsibility to create a sense of family," said Peters. "It's one thing to be born into a family, but it is just as important to create those bonds and emotions with those who aren't united by blood."

In 2003, Peters brought this perspective to the National Veterans Wheelchair Games. "On the first night of the Games, I arrived in a rental car only knowing six people, but within two hours I'd made life-long friends."

Although Peters has won a series of gold and silver medals (in archery, swimming and 9-ball) over the past three years, he considers the camaraderie among the athletes, staff and volunteers his most memorable experience. "It was wonderful to see a group of people come together like family," Peters said. "Friendship and loyalty are built in a very short period of time." Peters believes that the Wheelchair Games allow

veterans to see that their athletic skills can remain in tact, in spite of their injuries. "I've learned to modify how I participate in athletics. I'm still as good as I used to be, I just had to modify. The injury didn't change me as an individual."

Even at a young age, Peters' ability to excel in athletics was evident. In his late teens, he traveled across Asia to study several different forms of martial arts, which he still practices. He was first introduced to wheelchair sports with sled hockey, an adaptive form of hockey for disabled athletes. Peters looks forward to the Games coming to Alaska this year. "It's a chance for veterans from across the country to experience a state they have probably never visited." Peters serves as president of the Alaska Disabled Veterans Sports Program, and sits on the Americans with Disabilities Act Commission for the Municipality of Anchorage. He also owns and manages a fine jewelry business and is a government contractor – a major career leap from his days in the Army as a Spanish linguist.

A paraplegic, Peters uses a wheelchair because of neurological damage. Exuding confidence



**Don Peters at the 2005 NVWG slalom event.**

and eloquence in a humble and giving manner, he has no immediate plans to slow down. At the 2006 National Veterans Wheelchair Games, he plans to again compete in the archery and swimming events.

Don Peters firmly believes that the Wheelchair Games rebuild self-esteem. "I've seen a lot of depression with individuals in wheelchairs because they aren't living up to their potential. The Games are a means to stay in a positive state of mind and see that, with modification, every goal is achievable." Don Peters is living proof.

Chasing the Midnight Sun

## **ANCHORAGE CITIZENS VOLUNTEER!**

Many professional leaders in the Anchorage community are chairing the committees involved in planning for the Games, working hand-in-hand with the local VA medical facility.

The community's Fourth of July Parade Committee is in the midst of plans that will include having the NVWG athletes front and center at the Fourth of July parade. The Anchorage Convention and Visitors Bureau, along with the municipal and state

governments, have made donations to the Games with funds, staff, waiving of fees and improvements to venues to help support this incredible event. "Fans in the Stands" will be cheering at all of the competitions. Numerous organizations are stepping forward to volunteer and support the Games.

The city of Anchorage welcomes the opportunity to host national and international events. Some of the events that Anchorage has recently hosted include the Arctic Winter Games, 2001 Special Olympics World Winter Games, the

Iditarod, 2003 World Mountain Running Championships, 2004 U.S. Chevy Alpine Ski Championships, 2005 NIKE U.S. Snowshoe Championships, the National Cross Country Masters Ski championship, the International Airlines Ski Federation, and numerous national and international trade and travel groups, societies and associations.

The entire Anchorage community is proud to add the 26<sup>th</sup> National Veterans Wheelchair Games to this impressive roster!

### **UNVEILING ALASKA'S MYSTERIES**

**Land of the Midnight Sun:** Daylight in Anchorage during early July is around 19 hours long. The sun rises at 4 a.m. and sets around 11 p.m.

**Northern Lights:** Anchorage's bright starry nights are nature's perfect backdrop for dancing northern lights, also known as aurora borealis. The northern lights can be incredibly bright, multi-hued and fast moving. The most common color is a brilliant yellow-green. Colorful displays can produce red, blue and purple patterns. While Alaska is well known for the northern lights, you won't be able to see them in July. Fall, winter and spring are the prime seasons for viewing northern lights, and the best displays tend to be accompanied by sub-zero temperatures and moonless skies.

**Weather:** The average temperature in Anchorage in July is 58 degrees F.

**Wildlife:** In Anchorage, you can easily view moose, dall sheep, foxes and more than 150 species of birds. You can also see whales riding the surf in Turnagain Arm just east of Anchorage. While bears are not likely seen without a visit to the Alaska Zoo, they have been known to wander into town on occasion. For more information, visit [www.Anchorage.net](http://www.Anchorage.net).

Chasing the Midnight Sun

# REGISTRATION

The athlete application packet, as well as additional travel information, can be found online at [www.pva.org/sports/games/gameindex.htm](http://www.pva.org/sports/games/gameindex.htm)

The registration committee would like to encourage you to get your application in as early as possible so they can verify all pertinent information. Registration closes April 15, 2006.

## Schedule of Events\*

Dates, times and locations could change. Please visit [www.wheelchairgames.org](http://www.wheelchairgames.org) for the most up-to-date information.

### MONDAY, JULY 3

9 a.m.—4 p.m. Registration & Expo  
11:30 a.m. Games Kick -Off  
6:30 p.m. Opening Ceremonies  
8 p.m. Welcome Reception

### TUESDAY, JULY 4

10 a.m. Fourth of July Parade  
Handcycling  
3 p.m. All other sporting events begin!

### WEDNESDAY, JULY 5

8 a.m.—10 p.m. Sporting Events

### THURSDAY, JULY 6

Kids Day at the Games  
9 a.m.—10 p.m. Sporting Events  
11 a.m. Kids Day at Anchorage Stadium  
5:30 p.m. Block Party

### FRIDAY, JULY 7

9 a.m.—10 p.m. Sporting Events

### SATURDAY, JULY 8

9 a.m.—5 p.m. Sporting Events  
7:30 p.m. Closing Ceremonies and Banquet

### **SADLER'S ULTRA CHALLENGE COINCIDES WITH GAMES**

At 267 miles, Sadler's Ultra Challenge is the longest wheelchair and handcycle race in the world. Athletes travel from around the globe to participate in this six-day test of athleticism and endurance, to race from Fairbanks to Anchorage in the sun, wind and rain.

"This race is the Tour de France of adaptive sports..." said Ultra Challenge Technical Director Ian Lawless of the U.S. Handcycling Federation, "...and you are not considered an elite [wheelchair or handcycle] racer until you've completed the Ultra Challenge at least once!"

The 2006 Ultra Challenge, which is the 22nd edition of the event, promises to deliver even more

excitement since the race finale will coincide with the handcycle event of the 26th National Veterans Wheelchair Games in downtown Anchorage. The Ultra Challenge final stage will follow the annual Fourth of July parade, and then the NVWG handcycle races on July Fourth, in front of a roaring crowd downtown.

For more details about Sadler's Ultra Challenge, please visit: [www.challengealaska.org](http://www.challengealaska.org).

### Presenters & Hosts of the 26th NVWG

Department of Veterans Affairs  
Paralyzed Veterans of America  
Alaska VA Healthcare System  
Northwest Chapter, PVA

### **VOLUNTEERING:**

Opportunities are available for friends and family members to volunteer while enjoying the Games. The volunteer application can be found at [www.wheelchairgamesanchorage.net](http://www.wheelchairgamesanchorage.net). Complete the application and mail it to the address shown on the form.