



Community Newsletter

Anchorage, Alaska

November 2005

www.wheelchairgames.org

National Veterans Wheelchair Games

Chasing the Midnight Sun

VETERAN WHEELCHAIR ATHLETES:

THE GAMES WANT YOU! JOIN THE ALASKA TEAM!

What better time to check out the National Veterans Wheelchair Games than while they are held in Anchorage, Alaska, July 3-8, 2006! The Local Organizing Committee (LOC) would like to see the Alaska Team double, triple or even quadruple in size. The official events are: air guns, archery, basketball, bowling, field events, handcycling, motorized wheelchair rally, power soccer, quad rugby, slalom, softball, swimming, table tennis, track and weightlifting. The Games are open to veterans with disabilities who require the use of a wheelchair for athletic competition.

Sports can be adapted for all levels of ability, whether you use a wheelchair every day or perhaps use prosthetic devices day to day but require a wheelchair to compete in sports. There are three competitive divisions at the Games. The novice divi-

sion is for first year competitors, those who have never competed in any organized wheelchair sports event, regardless of age. The open division is for all competitors who have competed in a sanctioned wheelchair sports competition or past National Veterans Wheelchair Games. Finally, the masters division is for competitors 40 years of age or older. (A novice competitor who is 40 or older may select either the novice or masters division.) Games officials will classify you so you are competing against others with similar abilities.

We encourage you to find out more about the exciting opportunities available to you with the 2006 Games being held right here in Alaska. Please contact Scott Kelter, VA Coordinator for the Games, at (907) 334-3503; Judy Thompson, VA Voluntary Services, at (907) 257-5494; or Vern Bussing, Alaska representative for the NW Paralyzed Veterans of America, (907) 333-6523. Don't miss out on this opportunity to join your fellow veterans for competition, camaraderie and a great time!

Presenters & Hosts of the 26th NVWG

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

Local Organizing Committee (LOC)

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LOCAL ALASKAN ATHLETE PROFILE

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SUSAN R. MACAULAY is hoping she'll get an air rifle for Christmas this year (and she's pretty sure she'll get one). Until that happens, though, she's been borrowing one to start her training for the 26th National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Anchorage. At the 2005 Games in Minneapolis, Macaulay won a gold medal in the novice division for the air guns event. If you'll pardon the pun, she's got a good shot at winning another medal in Anchorage this July. Macaulay, 39, a retired US Air Force Avionics Navigation System Specialist, lives in Juneau. A car accident in 1988

left her with a traumatic brain injury, and although she can stand and walk short distances, she gets around most of the time using a motorized scooter.

No stranger to competition, Macaulay played tennis, racquetball, softball and soccer prior to her accident. At the 2006 Games, she hopes to compete in bowling and air guns, and possibly a few other events (depending on the progress of her rehabilitation after upcoming hand surgeries). "Being able to compete makes me feel part of the group," Macaulay said. "At the

Games, I'm not a one and only. Once you are disabled, you feel apart from everyone else. The Games show what you can do – and there are so many things you can do!"

Macaulay is excited the Games will be in Alaska this year. "We have so many wonderful things to see and do here," she said. Macaulay's husband plans to join her in Anchorage for the events this summer.



VOLUNTEERING FOR THE GAMES

- Do you want to give something back to the veterans who have served our country?
- Do you need some community service experience for your résumé or college applications?
- Do you want to do something meaningful that makes a difference?
- Do you want a life-changing experience?

If you answered "yes" to any one of these questions, sign up now to volunteer at the 26th National Veterans Wheelchair Games!

A multitude of volunteer opportunities are available to cater to your special interests and talents. Just a few of the positions include computer support, entertainment, food service, hospitality/information services, baggage handlers, photography or Photoshop, registration, security, special events, and data management. Do you like a particular sport? Volunteer for a position to help with that sporting venue or volunteer to be a "fan in the stands."

Leadership positions are also available. Some key positions currently open are venue management leaders, engineering/construction, and warehouse support. Venue management leaders do on-site problem-solving and ensure that communication, logistics and volunteers for a particular venue are coordinated. Engineering and construction involves building wheelchair ramps as well as possible electrical work. Warehouse support includes unloading and organizing equipment from shipping containers, moving equipment to venues during the week of the Games, and assembly and take down before and after events.

You can volunteer as an individual or as a group. Volunteering at the Games is a great opportunity for a church group, school groups, local businesses, workplace department and others, to get together and volunteer for a wonderful cause. Shifts will generally be 4 to 6 hours long. A general volunteer orientation will be provided to all volunteers, as well as job-specific training and a venue walk-through. Volunteers must be at least 14 years of age. To volunteer or with any questions, contact Sarah at Volunteers@alaskadestinations.com.

Chasing the Midnight Sun

**INTRODUCING THE COORDINATORS OF
THE NATIONAL VETERANS
WHEELCHAIR GAMES (NVWG)
LOCAL ORGANIZING COMMITTEE (LOC)**

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Three key individuals are at the helm for the 26th NVWG in Anchorage.

Scott Kelter is the VA's 26th NVWG Coordinator. Kelter is leading the efforts of local VA employees, contract personnel and volunteers to ensure a successful event this July.

Char McClelland and Melissa Anderson of *Alaska Destination Specialists* are the LOC Program Coordinators and work directly with VA. In addition to their duties as program coordinators, McClelland is coordinating the special events and services for the Games. Anderson is overseeing logistics, volunteers and administrative support and is assisting with meet and venue management.

The LOC consists of more than 50 subcommittees, all led by VA and community volunteers. The LOC is well on its way in its plans for the 500+ wheelchair athletes and their families expected in Anchorage in July. In addition to introducing many Alaskans to the world of accessibility, the Games will give many of the participating veterans a one-time opportunity to visit and experience Alaska.

Some of the special events McClelland is planning include opening ceremonies and the wel-

come reception at the Sullivan Arena on July 3rd, a block party in the Anchorage town square on July 6th, and closing ceremonies on July 8th, also being held at Sullivan Arena. All events will showcase Alaska using a variety of special themes. McClelland is also organizing athlete services such as meals, hospitality, accommodations and memorabilia. No small task for a group this size, meals will be provided at the hotels and the Egan Convention Center. Hospitality volunteers will be located at the airport as the athletes arrive and depart, as well as at the hotels. According to McClelland, Alaskans share a spirit of hospitality that goes beyond that of most locations. She knows the athletes will be overwhelmed by Alaskan friendliness.

Anderson has been busy as well, overseeing the logistics and operations of the Games. Event venues are located throughout Anchorage and include the Sullivan Arena, O'Malley Sports Complex, Anchorage Football Stadium, Delaney Park, Egan Convention Center, Westchester Lagoon and Bartlett High School. Seven UPS cargo containers have already arrived in Anchorage with equipment for the Games and will soon be unloaded and organized in Games warehouse space. Volunteer recruitment is ongoing, as is fund raising, medical support and

durable medical equipment, security and transportation. When asked why the National Veterans Wheelchair Games are so important, Anderson said, "At a time when our country is at war and so many brave men and women are fighting for our freedom, it's only fitting to put on a world class event for world class athletes."



From L to R: Melissa Anderson, Scott Kelter and Char McClelland

As VA's overall coordinating director, Kelter is pleased that the community is so involved in Games planning. He believes that the Games are important for three main reasons. One is rehabilitation, particularly for newly injured veterans who haven't yet experienced wheelchair competition. Another is camaraderie, and the chance to share a bond with others who were in the military and have challenges to their mobility. The third benefit is in the area of setting goals, and providing something to train for and look forward to. "The more veteran athletes you share time with, the more great stories you'll hear," Kelter said. "That, in and of itself, makes it worth it."



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* DONATIONS & SPONSORSHIPS *

While the 26th Games are financially supported by the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Paralyzed Veterans of America, the LOC must also raise additional funds to host this major event. In addition to raising funds to support the operation and execution of the Games, it would be wonderful to be able to give all of the special events that unique Alaskan "flair" for which our state is so well-known. Any enhancement to the basics contributes to the athletes' enjoyment of this once-in-a-lifetime experience, and also helps us meet our goal of hosting the best Games ever. We would like to assist the athletes get to other parts of Alaska as well, to truly experience not only Anchorage but also the surrounding areas.

Co-chairs Patti McGuire and Carl Marrs are working with local corporate donors to raise additional dollars. Corporate sponsorship packages are available. For more information on sponsoring the Games, please contact Melissa Anderson at Melissa@alaskadestinations.com.

THE DUCT TAPE BALL 2006

We're proud to announce that *The Duct Tape Ball 2006* has designated the 26th National Veterans Wheelchair Games as one of the organizations to benefit from this lively annual event! This will be the second year that a portion of the proceeds will go toward the Games.

The fun and charitable ball will be held Friday, February 3, 2006, at the Anchorage Downtown Marriott. Tickets are \$100 per person or \$1,000 per table. Other sponsorship opportunities are available. Contact Melissa@alaskadestinations.com for info.

SPEAKERS AVAILABLE: Help us get the word out about the 26th Games! We would love to speak to your organization or company about this great event. We can tell you more about the Games and how to become involved with the largest annual wheelchair sports event in the world! To arrange for a speaker, contact Sarah McClelland at Volunteers@alaskadestinations.com.

BARBARA J. HOPKINS is the 2006 Games co-leader of both registration and the Fourth of July Parade, a special bonus event this year. Most of the veteran competitors will participate in the downtown Anchorage parade this year, and, while some may have been in a Fourth of July parade before, it has never happened during Games week!

Hopkins and her family have volunteered for the Games since 1999. She has a personal reason for doing so since her son, Jimmy, used to compete in the Games until his death in 2001. "Jimmy was diagnosed and medically retired with multiple sclerosis after 17 years of active duty with the U.S. Army," Hopkins said. "The Paralyzed Veterans of America and Disabled American Veterans gave Jimmy a new lease on life. Without so many caring individuals, we would have lost Jimmy earlier."

Jimmy, who was the sports director of PVA's Northwest Chapter, died just two months before the 2001 Games in

New York City. In his memory, the chapter president asked Hopkins to carry the chapter flag and her daughter to carry the state flag during the opening ceremonies of the Games that year. That is where Hopkins met George Pikus of Kodiak, Alaska.

Hopkins and Pikus spoke about establishing an organization in Alaska to support the state's veteran athletes with disabilities. They formed a plan soon after and, on November 17 of that year, they officially organized the "Alaska Disabled Veterans Sports Program, Inc." Membership soon increased from four to 15 and, under Pikus's direction, the group started working on bringing the Games to Anchorage.

Barbara Hopkins plans to be an enthusiastic "fan in the stands" at the 2006 Games. Softball, basketball, bowling and air guns hold a special place in her heart, though, since those were Jimmy's sports.



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