

National Veterans Wheelchair Games



Coach Profile (Alaska)

Bill Campbell – Always Helping Others



Coaches at the National Veterans Wheelchair Games often wear many hats, recruiting members and helping them train, raising funds, coordinating travel, purchasing team shirts or uniforms, and traveling to the event to cheer on participants during competition. Bill Campbell, of Anchorage, Alaska, is one such coach.

A veteran himself, Campbell served in the U.S. Army from 1967–1970. Although he is not a wheelchair athlete himself, he dedicates his time and energy to volunteer 40 hours each week at the local VA health care facility in Anchorage, and has coached the Alaska VA Wheelchair Team since 2003. For his volunteer efforts, Campbell was presented with the 4,000 Hours Club award from President George W. Bush in 2005. Today, he has completed more than 6,250 hours of voluntary service.

Why does Campbell commit so much of his time to volunteering? He says it's to give back to the VA system that helped him through a heart operation, as well as a period of homelessness. When he was down and out, the local VA provided housing and resources to get him back on his feet – literally.

For Campbell, helping disabled vets comes quite naturally. He helped care for his paralyzed grandfather, who was a 24th Infantry Buffalo soldier in World War 1. Through experiences in his own life and while working with disabled vets, Campbell finds fulfillment when helping wheelchair athletes channel feelings of frustration and anger into a productive activity such as sports.

Campbell says that participating in wheelchair sports “helps disabled vets’ self-esteem and helps them find themselves,” often discovering a new identity while they gain more mobility and confidence.

With the 2006 National Veterans Wheelchair Games being held in Alaska, Campbell is excited to dispel myths about the state. “It’s very good to see vets from the Lower 48 coming here to see what Anchorage is all about,” says Campbell. “A lot of people ask, ‘How is Anchorage?’ They think there are igloos up here, and then when they get here, they see what it’s really all about.” Campbell is also excited about local disabled veterans being able to meet so many veterans from other places. He hopes the interaction at the Games will encourage more veterans with disabilities to participate in future events.

In 1963, Campbell had the honor of meeting Martin Luther King, Jr., and shaking his hand. He has always been inspired by King’s words, “I have a dream,” and it is with these words that Team Coach Bill Campbell remains motivated to helping improve the lives of others.