

National Veterans Wheelchair Games



Athlete Profile (National)

Wayne Muscato – Vietnam Vet Keeps Fit to Help Others



Wayne Muscato was an infantryman with the U.S. Army serving in Vietnam from 1969-1971. During the final year of his tour, a sudden rocket attack blew him off the troops' quarters, resulting in serious shrapnel wounds to his back. Some 23 years later, Muscato says, some of the remaining shrapnel from the explosion moved, resulting in a spinal cord injury that left him an incomplete paraplegic.

It was while Muscato, 55, was receiving care at VA's spinal cord injury unit in Palo Alto, California, that a recreation therapist first told him about the National Veterans Wheelchair Games and encouraged him to participate. It was clearly good therapy, as Muscato is competing in the Games for the fifth time next month when the event is held in Anchorage, Alaska.

"I love the friendship, fellowship and honesty of everybody at the Games," Muscato said. He also enjoys the competition, returning to his home in Sun Valley, Nevada, with gold medals (in nine-ball and wheelchair slalom) the past two years. This year, he is signed up to compete in archery, bowling, a motorized wheelchair rally and the power chair 220, a track event for competitors using motorized wheelchairs. "I don't have a favorite event, but my goal is to compete in a new event each year," he said.

Before he was injured, Muscato enjoyed softball, football, boxing and skiing. He is an intermediate adaptive skier, and tackled the Rocky Mountains at the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic this past April using a bi-ski. He also took part in other adaptive sports and activities while he was there. "Participating in these events increases my self respect, makes me forget about my problems and want to help others. The experience is priceless."

His goals for the 2006 Games in Alaska are to keep fit and to help any other veterans that he can. "Competing in the National Veterans Wheelchair Games gives me purpose and allows me to share my knowledge after years in a wheelchair," he said. "To all my fellow competitors I say, 'you all make me proud!'"

Muscato's son, Tony recently returned from military service with the U.S. Army in Iraq. He will be going back there again soon.