

National Veterans Wheelchair Games



Athlete Profile (Local)

August Krieser – Participating is Winning

August Krieser is determined not to use his car. By taking public transportation in his home town of Manitowoc, Wisconsin, he hopes to encourage other wheelchair users to try the bus and see how accessible it can be. As a member of the Bay Lakes Planning Commission, he felt he should set an example, and by making it better for himself he could also make it easier for someone else. After a 1980 motorcycle accident left the Army veteran and former firefighter a quadriplegic, Krieser, 61, spent time in rehabilitation and eventually decided to return to Silver Lake College, later graduating from the University of Wisconsin as a social worker.

Although Krieser says he has “grown more mellow” over the years, he still loves a new challenge. A longtime competitor in the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, he is attending the event for the 20th time this June, when he will add handcycling to his competition repertoire – a sport he tried in a charity ride earlier this year. He will also compete in bowling, wheelchair slalom, and two field events (club throw and discus). He especially enjoys the slalom event, a challenging obstacle course that changes every year. “The excitement of competition never fades at the Wheelchair Games,” said Krieser. “As the years pass by, the concept of ‘winning’ takes on a new meaning. Winning events used to mean taking home a medal in any given event. Now, winning means entering new events and doing my best. Meeting old friends and making new ones is the true spirit of the Games.”

A wheelchair athlete since 1987, Krieser says that competing in the Games is “ninety percent mental, but it feels 100 percent physical. It makes you feel like you physically belong. When I see the younger participants, at first they are apprehensive. Then I see a complete change after their self-esteem is lifted and they start to socially interact with other athletes.” Krieser admits, “My primary issue is getting the novices to compete and showing them that they are no less of a human being in spite of their injuries. They can still fully participate in society. I get the most pleasure out of mentoring the younger athletes who ask for my advice.”

Like many of the Wisconsin veterans, August Krieser is excited that the annual national event is being held so close to home this year. “The Games were here 25 years ago and it will be great to have it so close, to get that extra support from family and friends. Who could have imagined how it has grown and its impact on so many lives.”

