

# National Veterans Wheelchair Games



## Athlete Profile (Local)

### Phillip E. Rosenberg – Change is a Learning Experience

“Before I enlisted in the service, I worked on a dairy farm where I milked cows for a living,” said Wisconsin’s Phil Rosenberg, a 56-year-old Army veteran who was born and raised near Green Bay. He enlisted in the Army and served with the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division and the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division while stationed in Vietnam. He was also stationed in Panama and South Korea, where he was trained as a power plant operator/mechanic. A highly decorated veteran, Rosenberg’s many military medals include the Bronze Star, the Army Commendation Medal, the Vietnam Campaign and Service Medals, the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry and a Presidential Unit Citation, among several others.

Although he received some injuries to his hand and arm while serving in Vietnam, Rosenberg was much more seriously injured after he returned home. It was 1972, right after he was honorably discharged when he was injured in the car accident that changed his life forever, resulting in a spinal cord injury that left him a quadriplegic. The injury didn’t stop Phil Rosenberg for long, though. In 1982, he graduated magna cum laude from the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee with a degree in broad field social studies and secondary education.

A founding member of Wisconsin Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), Rosenberg was elected Chapter President in 1998, a position he still holds. He is also currently employed at the Milwaukee VA Medical Center as a vocational rehabilitation specialist. Both jobs allow him to work with and assist other veterans on a daily basis.

“Living in a wheelchair has changed me,” Rosenberg says. I’ve learned to be patient and I realize it takes time to do some things. My goal is to continue doing all the things I did before my injury.” As a wheelchair athlete, he enjoys competing because each time he does, he learns something new. “I get excited about teaching the new veterans what I have learned,” he says. At the National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Milwaukee this year, Rosenberg plans to compete in archery, bowling, table tennis, quad rugby, and the wheelchair slalom.

He learned about the Wheelchair Games from his recreation therapist the first year the event was held, in 1981. While he missed that first event, he has attended every one since including the 2<sup>nd</sup> National Veterans Wheelchair Games, which were also held in Milwaukee. “The biggest surprise about the events is the high level of competition that’s always there,” Rosenberg says. “I know how well I can perform in certain sports, and then I watch the other veterans accomplish even higher feats. Even the non-disabled spectators are in awe.”

Speaking to young people about understanding and living with a disability is a high priority for Phil Rosenberg. He wants the newly injured veterans to know, “Learning is an experience and you can learn a lot about living when you are in a wheelchair. By attending the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, you can network with people like yourself. The Games provide a way for us to integrate back into society.” Calling it “community re-entry,” Rosenberg puts it like this, “Milwaukee is a friendly community that is putting together the best show ever to make you feel at home.”