



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**Heroism and Athletics Converge in Milwaukee This Summer
*VA and PVA Bring Veterans Annual Wheelchair Sports Event***

WASHINGTON – Five hundred disabled American heroes will converge on Milwaukee June 19 – 23 to test their agility, athleticism and strength of spirit in the 27th National Veterans Wheelchair Games, the largest annual wheelchair sports event in the world. Veterans from the recent conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq will again join veterans from the Gulf War, Vietnam and other conflicts in 17 competitive events.

“The National Veterans Wheelchair Games are a chance for disabled veterans, who receive the benefits of VA’s world-class health care, to share in the camaraderie of friendly competition,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson. “The determination, stamina and competitive spirit on display at the Games are an inspiration.”

The Wheelchair Games, presented by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), are open to all U.S. military veterans who use wheelchairs for sports competition due to spinal cord injuries, certain neurological conditions, amputations or other mobility impairments. For the first time at the Games, a demonstration track event will be held for athletes who are able to stand using prosthetic devices.

The Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center in Milwaukee and the Wisconsin chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) are hosting the 2007 Games. Veterans competing in the National Veterans Wheelchair Games come from nearly all 50-states, plus the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and Great Britain.

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Wheelchair Games 2/2/2/2

“Our association with the National Veterans Wheelchair Games helps fulfill our promise of improving the quality of life for veterans with disabilities,” said Randy L. Pleva, Sr., national president of the Paralyzed Veterans of America. “When the wheelchair athletes assemble in Milwaukee, the intensity of competition will be exceeded only by the fellowship of veterans united together.”

At the Games, veterans will compete in track and field, swimming, basketball, weightlifting, softball, air guns, quad rugby, 9-ball, bowling, table tennis, archery, handcycling, a motorized rally, wheelchair slalom, a power wheelchair relay and power soccer. Trap shooting and wheelchair curling will be exhibition events this year.

Sports are important in the therapy used to treat many disabilities. VA is a recognized leader in rehabilitation, with therapy programs available at VA health care facilities across the nation. For many injured veterans, the Wheelchair Games provide their first exposure to wheelchair athletics.

The 27th National Veterans Wheelchair Games begin June 19 with a wheelchair basketball demonstration at Red Arrow Park, as well as the 2007 Disabled Sports, Recreation and Fitness Expo. Kids Day at the Games is slated to take place on June 22 at the Milwaukee County Zoo, where local children, many with disabilities, will meet the athletes and learn about wheelchair sports.

Opening and closing ceremonies will be held at the Midwest Airlines Convention Center, along with many of the week’s competitive events. Admission is free to the public and the community is encouraged to attend.

To volunteer during the week, or to obtain more information about the competitive events, visit the Games Web site at www.wheelchairgames.org.

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