



## Athlete Profile (National)

### Johnny Williams, Jr. – Making the Most of It



Before Johnny Williams, Jr., entered his first National Veterans Wheelchair Games competition three years ago, he nearly gave up on fulfilling his dreams. Plenty has changed for Williams since 2005; he found other veterans who live with the same challenges he faces every day, and that has given him strength, hope and a feeling of enlightenment.

"When I became paralyzed, I was depressed and thought my life was over," said Williams, who became a paraplegic after a knife injury to his spine. "The Games woke me up and made me realize that my life wasn't over, and that added to my self-esteem and confidence. Now, I actually feel like I can accomplish something."

Williams, 42, a disabled Army veteran from Peoria, Illinois, has accomplished a lot since he was first injured. For two consecutive years, he has brought home the gold in the weightlifting competition. "I am honored to be a part of the Wheelchair Games, and help show that life is what you make of it," Williams said.

This year, the National Veterans Wheelchair Games will be held July 25-29 in Omaha, Nebraska. There, Williams will compete in the bowling, weightlifting, javelin, discus, and shot-put events.

"My favorite thing is watching all the people having fun, laughing and enjoying themselves," said Williams. "I get to meet other veterans, stay in great shape and compete against the best in the world." Williams is striving to be at his best in Omaha. He stays fit and receives regular care at the VA Medical Center in Milwaukee, host of the 2007 National Veterans Wheelchair Games.

"Don't let life pass you by," he said. "You are here for a reason and you should make the best of it." Johnny Williams, Jr., sure is glad he's making the best of it – and having the time of his life in the process.