

National Veterans Wheelchair Games



Athlete Profile (National)

Terral Ramirez – A Special Fellowship

Terral Ramirez, 57, a combat-wounded Vietnam veteran from Moss Point, Miss., is attending his fourth National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Omaha, Neb., this July. He was introduced to the National Veterans Wheelchair Games through his local Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) chapter. “PVA representatives encouraged me to participate in the Games as a part of my rehabilitation process,” Ramirez said. “I first attended the Games in San Antonio, Texas in 2000 and I’m so glad I did. Pushing myself physically and mentally through competition certainly helped me with my rehabilitation.”

At the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, veterans typically enjoy a special fellowship throughout the week-long event. For most participants, Ramirez included, the experience is priceless. For him, though, that special fellowship extends beyond the week of the Games to his volunteer work with local veterans service organizations, as well as the contacts made at his local VA medical center in Biloxi, Miss.

Ramirez, a double amputee, is an Army veteran who served two tours of duty in Vietnam. “I vividly remember a turning point, a sort of wake-up call,” he said. “You can let the fact that you need to use a wheelchair overwhelm you – or you can push yourself beyond that feeling and see where life might take you, *regardless* of the wheelchair.”

In recent years, Ramirez has volunteered his time talking with other veterans who face similar physical and emotional challenges. Complications of an illness, an accident or a combat-related injury may have led them to their wheelchairs, and the veterans he speaks with could have served during any war or conflict as well as during peacetime. “Each one of these veterans feels at some point like they are the only ones,” said Ramirez. “Regardless of their circumstances, we all share a common bond. I’ve been where each one of them has been, and I know what they are facing. I try to provide encouragement, share information, help them consider alternatives and sometimes just be there to listen.”

This year at the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, Ramirez will compete in the field events (including javelin, shot-put and discus), as well as softball and trapshooting. Beyond the Games and his work with fellow veterans, he also has a passion for movies and music, playing both guitar and keyboard. In addition, he enjoys bowling and playing on a wheelchair basketball team back home. It doesn’t seem to really matter where he is, Ramirez is always out there doing what he can to share that special fellowship. “I’ll be easy to find at the Games,” he said. “I’ll be the one in the red wheelchair and I’ll be talking!” He will, no doubt, be busy establishing (or re-kindling) his own special brand of camaraderie all the while.

