



**Department of  
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# **News Release**

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## **World's Largest Disabled Veterans Ski Clinic Launches this Weekend at Snowmass, Colo.**

WASHINGTON – The 22<sup>nd</sup> National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic will open this Sunday at Snowmass Village, Colo. More than 400 disabled veterans, including nearly 70 recently injured during Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom (OIF/OEF) will ski the Rocky Mountains through Friday. This ski clinic for disabled veterans is the largest event of its kind.

“We are extremely honored to not only welcome our recently injured veterans but to show them that recovering from traumatic injury is to confront challenges with confidence; to live life to its fullest,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. “Adaptive sports give veterans a sense of accomplishment and enable them to redefine their capabilities.”

The Clinic is an annual rehabilitation program open to U.S. military veterans with traumatic brain injuries, spinal cord injuries, orthopedic amputations, visual impairments, certain neurological problems and other disabilities who receive care at a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facility or military treatment facility.

For new veterans, the Clinic is usually the first time they can test their rehabilitation gains outside of the hospital environment in an activity that is both challenging and fun. An estimated 200 certified ski instructors for the disabled, and several current and former members of the U.S. Disabled Ski Team serve as ski instructors to meet the unique needs of the participants.

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## Winter Sports Clinic 2/2/2/2

Army veteran, Shane Parsons, 22, who currently resides in San Antonio, Texas, is an example of the transformation that occurs on the mountain. Injured September 30, 2006 by a roadside bomb in Ramadi, Iraq, Parsons lost both his legs and suffered a head injury. After attending his first Clinic last year, he said, "It was absolutely awesome. This event helps us (newly injured veterans) get into the mentality of saying 'hey I can do this, and if I can do this, I can do other things for myself, too.'"

Co-sponsored by VA and the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), the Clinic is a world leader in promoting rehabilitation by instructing veterans with disabilities in adaptive Alpine and Nordic skiing, and introducing them to a number of other adaptive recreational activities and sports. For many newly injured veterans, the Clinic offers them their first experiences in winter sports and gives them the inspiration for continued self development.

At the six-day event, veterans will also learn rock climbing, scuba diving, snowmobiling, curling and sled hockey. The U.S. Secret Service will provide a course on self-defense. All activities are designed to help participants develop winter sports skills and take part in a variety of other adaptive sports and workshops, which demonstrate that having a physical or visual disability need not be an obstacle to an active, rewarding life.

"As a disabled veteran and ski instructor at the Winter Sports Clinic, I can personally vouch for the amazing impact it has on the lives of our participants," said DAV National Commander Robert T. Reynolds. "Thanks to the wonderful partnership between the DAV and the Department of Veterans Affairs, these miracles will once again take place in the lives of many of our deserving wounded warriors."

VA is a recognized leader in rehabilitative and recreational therapies. With 153 medical centers, VA operates more than 1,400 sites of care, including 895 ambulatory care and community-based outpatient clinics, 135 nursing homes, 47 residential rehabilitation treatment programs, 209 Vet Centers and 108 comprehensive home-care programs. The DAV is a non-profit, congressionally chartered veterans service organization with a membership of more than one million wartime disabled veterans.

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For further information, contact Jenny Tankersley Ballou, VA public affairs coordinator, Winter Sports Clinic, at (757) 728-3450; or Rob Lewis, DAV Communications, at (859) 442-2049. Or log on to the event's Web site at: [www.wintersportsclinic.va.gov](http://www.wintersportsclinic.va.gov)