

RiVER CiTY DAIly

Thursday, June 28, 2012

Newsletter of the 32nd National Veterans Wheelchair Games

MISSION FOCUSED



**Veteran Juan Roldan
zeros in on his target**

Photo by Linnie Skidmore

William "Wheelchair Willie" Hendrickson, an Army National Guard Veteran, competed in every National Veterans Wheelchair Games since he was first urged to do so by Kelli Kaliszewski, a Recreational Therapist at the VA San Diego Healthcare System. Hendrickson had only been in a wheelchair for eight months when he first competed in Anchorage, Ala. in 2006 and says that it was a "life-changing event."

1 Hendrickson commemorated each of the last four years with a permanent addition in ink on his forearm. The tattoo is a vibrant depiction of the logo accompanied by the years he competed in the Games. He hopes to add to the tattoo and keep competing for years.

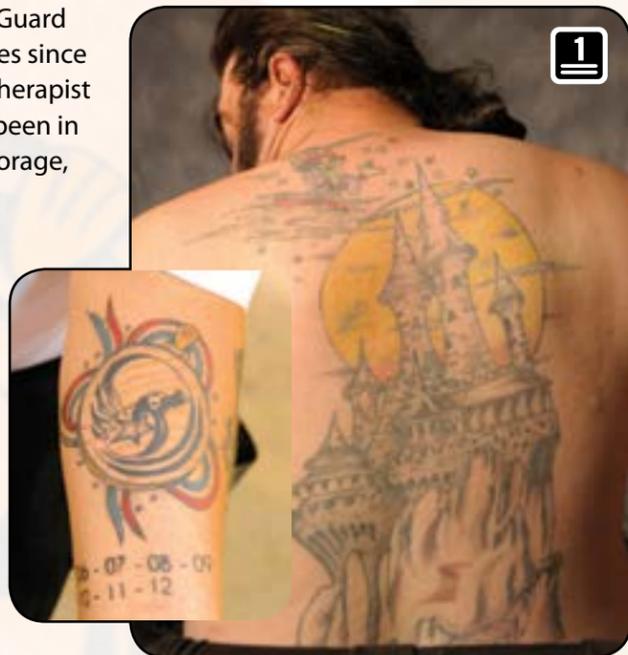
Hendrickson's love of the Games is apparent in the way he greets and interacts with other competitors, helping them get ready for their events. He says the best part is "just being here with my brothers and sisters. We all raised our hands. We signed the dotted line. We're brothers and sisters. This is like a family reunion."

2 "Bob Dylan said 'He not busy being born is busy dying,' I believe I need to reinvent myself every day to keep from dying," said Jerry "Bull" Baylor.

3 Laura Schwanger said, "This is an historical, old school Paralympics symbol from 1988." Schwanger attended the Paralympics that year for the first time, competing in track and field.

4 "The Games are very liberating, so I just go for it," said Leo Kelly.

5 Sonia Lucero said, "Chris is my hero, so it's to honor him." She is here supporting her boyfriend, Chris Jensen, who is participating in his fourth Games.



GOT INK?



Pull!

Trapshooting at the NVWG

Veteran athlete Harian Eibert spent Wednesday morning checking out the competition. But after winning his flight with a score of 43 and he hung around to cheer for his fellow Vets. He said, "Can't get enough of it. I'm ready to shoot some more."

Competitors from around the country enjoyed sunny skies and clear blue skies to match their shooting skills against clay pigeons at the Cornerstone Park Shooting club. The command "Pull!" quickly followed by the report of 12-gauge shotguns peppered the air as targets were released. The shots come quickly, as there is only one to two seconds to identify the target, aim and shoot. Five to fifteen mile-an-hour breezes add to the mix of uncertainty; the wind can and often does greatly affect the "pigeon's" trajectory.

Trapshooting pits a shooter's skill against the luck of the draw as a target is released from an oscillating throwing machine that pitches a four-inch diameter "clay pigeon" that closely resembles a mini-Frisbee at over 48 miles an hour. Competitors take up multiple positions 16 yards away from the thrower, not knowing if the target will fly straight or at an angle away from them, much like a bird flushing from cover.

Joey & Kyle

Retired U.S. Marine Joey Avellone, 35, and his young protégé Kyle, 13, mix it up during the NVWG "Kid's Day" event on June 27th. Kids Day pairs Veterans competing in the games with disabled children from the Richmond community to introduce them to adaptive sports including basketball, wheelchair slalom and T-ball. "This is my favorite part of the wheelchair games. An event like this gives kids hope and lets them know that although they have a disability, they can do almost any sport they want—they just have to modify the way they do it." Avellone knows what it's like to adapt to a new way of living. He was training to become a rescue swimmer in the Marine Combat Water Survivor Swimming School when, on April 1, 2001, he was paralyzed from the waist down during a training exercise



in Hawaii. Joey dove into the water after a fellow Marine, hitting a rock in the shallow water and breaking three vertebrae. Today, Joey is a volunteer peer counselor for disabled Veterans, a role model for newly injured combat veterans and an inspiration to kids like Kyle.



ATHLETES IN ACTION

It was brutal...

That's how Veena Burnett describes her husband, Alonzo "Loni" Burnett's, first experience with quad rugby. When her husband attended his first wheelchair games he saw quad rugby, originally named "murder-ball". The next year he signed up for the sometimes-brutal, always-tough sport. Now, he comes back year after year to win. This is not a sport you can just show up and play. Mr. Burnett practices each week with his team at home, and Ms. Burnett said, "If he didn't, he'd be through." Her husband comes to win every year, but the couple also looks forward to re-connecting with old friends and making new ones.

"Time, effort, commitment."

These are the words Tim Vixay uses to describe what is needed to compete in quad rugby, which he has participated in since 2009. He is "always studying and always trying to learn." He maintains his mental focus by practicing with his home team, reviewing videos of games and consulting with teammates. Ask him about the chair used in quad rugby and the discussion will involve words such as camber, center of gravity, speed vs. distance and offensive vs. defensive. This is a sport where customization is key to performance and people take it seriously - where man and machine meld as one. And Vixay has his own customized chair, which he has designed to meet his approach to the game. This is a man who takes his sport seriously. He's now taking it to the next level with plans to try out for the U.S. Paralympic Team. "Paralympic [athletes] are just as much, if not more, of Olympians. In fact, they have to deal with more than other Olympians." The competitiveness and camaraderie of quad rugby is what drew him to the games and continues to motivate him as he prepares for the U.S. Team.



Nine ball

Mr. Dougherty started playing pool with his father as soon as he could reach the table. Now he plays every week on his own professional table. "I want to do well and have fun. I'm very competitive," says Mr. Dougherty. Doing well is the goal for every game since '97 when he first starting competing. And what ensures he does well? Practice every week.



ORIGINAL ATHLETE PROFILE

CHUCK WILLIS, U.S. MARINE CORPS VETERAN

The magic of the games for 71-year old Marine Corps Veteran Chuck Willis is in the camaraderie. He should know. Willis was one of the driving forces behind the creation of the Games 32 years ago.

Willis's adaptive sports roots go back to 1973 when he, and other Veterans, formed the Independent Wheelchair Association in which Veteran athletes competed in regional games in Virginia.

He and his friends were asked what they were going to do for the International Year of Disabled Persons. They collectively decided to do a wheelchair game event on the McGuire campus. From there it was history in the making and now it is an anticipated event for Veterans across the country as the National Veterans Wheelchair Games.

Looking back on those first Games, Willis said he and the other organizers had no idea what they started would lead to the world's largest sporting event for wheelchair athletes.

"We started a local team that participated within the state," said Willis describing those humble beginnings. "That was as big as we thought it would get. When the International Year of the Disabled was declared we thought, 'Why not have a competition for Veterans.'"

According to Willis the group had fun, but "expected it to be over when it was over. To see it today, even 10 years down the line, we never anticipated this. It's a tremendous sight to see."

A Wheelchair Games Committee member, Willis is also the President of the Mid-Atlantic Chapter Paralyzed Veterans of America, the local co-hosts of this year's Games along with the McGuire VAMC. Chuck has been recognized for more than 10,000 hours of community service and is one of many legends in the Wheelchair Games. Despite fulltime employment and his extensive civic and volunteer contributions, he managed to compete in more than one-half of the Games over the past three decades.

This year, four years removed from a hip

replacement surgery, he has 'scaled back' and is only competing in five events: air guns, nine ball, shot put, javelin and discus.

One might ask why he's still competing after all these years, and for Willis, his motivation is professional as well as personal.

On the professional side, Willis spent 20 years working at McGuire VAMC as an Education Employment Coordinator and Patient Representative. In 1986, he co-authored the Peer Counseling Central Program subsequently adopted nationally by VA and has been a peer counselor ever since "working with Veterans with spinal cord injuries, training them, teaching them and directing them toward this [the National Veterans Wheelchair Games]."

On the personal side, "Activity is what keeps us going, keeps us living," Willis said. "I wasn't supposed to live 10 years. I always thought what I've done with my life I would never have done on my feet. I've enjoyed life in the chair, the people I have helped, the things I have done."



ODDS & ENDS

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS			
THURSDAY, JUNE 28	ACTIVITY	CLASS-DIV	LOCATION/ VENUE
5:30–9:00 A.M.	BREAKFAST		HOTELS
7:30 A.M.	SOFTBALL	GAMES 7-8	DIAMOND GREEN
8 A.M.	ARCHERY	ALL	DOREY PARK
	9 BALL	IA-B-IC	HALL A / GRCC
	AIR GUNS	ASSIGNED TIMES	BALLROOM / GRCC
9 A.M.	SOFTBALL	GAMES 9-10	DIAMOND GREEN
10:30 A.M.	SOFTBALL	CHAMP-CONSOLATION GAME	DIAMOND GREEN
10:30 A.M.–1:30 P.M.	LUNCH		HALL A / GRCC
1 P.M.	TABLE TENNIS	IA-B-C	HALL A / GRCC
1–4 P.M.	HANDCYCLE TUNE UP		HALL D / GRCC
1:30 P.M.	9 BALL	IV-V	HALL A / GRCC
	SLALOM	II-III	HALL B / GRCC
4:30–6:30 P.M.	DINNER		HALL A / GRCC
6:30 P.M.	POWER SOCCER	GAMES 9-10	HALLS C-D / GRCC
	BASKETBALL	GAMES 9	HALLS C-D / GRCC
7 P.M.	WEIGHTLIFTING WEIGH-IN		HALLS C-D / GRCC
8 P.M.	POWER SOCCER	CONSOLATION GAME	HALLS C-D / GRCC
	BASKETBALL	GAME 10	HALLS C-D / GRCC
	QUAD RUGBY	GAME 3	HALLS C-D / GRCC

GRCC = GREATER RICHMOND CONVENTION CENTER
CP OF VA-CC = CONSERVATION PARK OF VA

Medical Clinics

Hotel medical suites will be open daily from 7 a.m.–10:30 p.m. Staff will be on call from 10:30 p.m. until 7 a.m. and can be reached by calling your hotel's front desk. The operator will take the Veteran's name and room number before contacting medical staff.

Hilton Garden Inn, Room 218

(804) 344-4300, Ext. 7218

Crowne Plaza, Room 1124

(804) 788-0791, Ext. 1124

Omni Richmond, Rooms 319 & 321

(804) 344-7000, Ext. 7321

Greater Richmond Convention Cntr (GRCC)

Rooms E25 A & B

The Convention Center medical suite will be open daily from 7 a.m. until the last event at the Convention Center has ended. The suite will close Saturday, June 30 after the closing banquet.

Games medical staff are authorized to treat registered athletes or volunteers on duty. They can treat coaches and officials, but are unable to treat sponsors or family members. For more information, reference your Athletes and Coaches Guide.

Wheelchair Repair Shop, GRCC Room E10A

The repair shop will be open daily from 8 a.m.–5 p.m. (hours extended as necessary) until Saturday, June 30. Airport wheelchair repair will be available Sunday, June 24 and Sunday, July 1. Invacare minor repair service will be available at all off-site venues during events. For after-hours, emergency repair call (804) 314-4239.



Vote for the Spirit of the Games!

Look for drop boxes located throughout the Convention Center and in hotels. Make sure to vote before 12 p.m. on Thursday, June 28.

AWARDS SCHEDULE		
THURSDAY, JUNE 28	ACTIVITY	LOCATION/VENUE
11 A.M.–12 P.M.	SOFTBALL	SPORTS BACKERS
11 A.M.–1 P.M.	TUESDAY & WEDNESDAY EVENTS: BOWLING (IA,B,C), 9 BALL (IA,B,C)	AWARDS STAGE / GRCC
1–3 P.M.	TUESDAY & WEDNESDAY EVENTS: AIR GUNS	AWARDS STAGE / GRCC
3–5 P.M.	TUESDAY & WEDNESDAY EVENTS: TABLE TENNIS (IA,B,C), 9 BALL (IV,V), SLALOM (II,III)	AWARDS STAGE / GRCC
8:30–9:30 P.M.	TUESDAY & WEDNESDAY EVENTS: POWER SOCCER	HALLS C-D / GRCC

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