

Presented by the Department of Veterans Affairs and Paralyzed Veterans of America
National Veterans Wheelchair Games *The Games Shot* Newsletter Special Edition
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It's a Reunion at the Games for Patricia LaBar

The Mile High City served for many of the athletes, family members, coaches, staff and volunteers, as a family reunion marked with hugs, smiles and laughter, echoing across the convention center halls and athletic venues. For many, the National Veterans Wheelchair Games offer a place where old friends catch up on the past, and new friendships are shaped for a lifetime.

The spirit of the Games engages everyone with awe-inspiring emotions. Motivating others and supporting others is an ordinary expression of compassion that this year's Spirit of the Games honoree exudes with everyone she meets.

Patricia "Trish" LaBar, an Army Veteran from Heath, Texas describes the Games by saying, "The week of the Games is not about the week, but what we take back home with us."

LaBar has been participating in the National Veterans Wheelchair Games since 1995. She is a devoted basketball, softball and slalom competitor. Leia Turner, LaBar's niece who is with her at the Games this year said not to be fooled by Trish's "girly girl" appearance; she is a fierce competitor and she wants to win, but never at the cost of losing a friendship with another athlete.

Bob Crowe, one of the Games officials said this. "When you talk to Tricia about her accomplishments, her answers generally start with 'we' or 'the whole team.'" The Games are "All about the memories, not about the medals," LaBar says.

Injured in a 1992 horseback riding accident, it was three years post injury before LaBar got involved in the Wheelchair Games. Her local PVA chapter, especially Joe Jackson, Steven Ray and Jack Hasenyagers, were the motivators behind getting LaBar drawn into what she now calls, “A plan for my life...Those three years after my injury before 1995 where the darkest years of my life,” she said. Now, she regrets not getting involved with the Games sooner.

LaBar is so dedicated to what she refers as the “family reunion” of the Games that one year, while three weeks post shoulder surgery, she got herself discharged from the hospital early so she could attend the 2005 Games in Minneapolis. “There was simply no way I was missing the reunion,” she said.

LaBar is known for her giving personality and winning smile. She is the originator of the “Gimpies Gym” T-shirt, a staple souvenir at the Games that many athletes seek out when they meet up with her. She travels around from event to event during the Games with a backpack full of the shirts that demonstrate her creative humor. LaBar is also a National Title Sponsor of the National Wheelchair Basketball Association. She is writing a children’s book, she is the only female member of an all-wheelchair honor guard. She is a member of Texas PVA and she is also a frequent participant at the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic.

When asked what the Games mean to her, LaBar said, “When I hear the roar of the crowd, the adrenaline sensation is like the largest hug blanket I could ever feel.”

Each year, the Spirit of the Games award is given to an athlete who clearly demonstrates athletic competence, sportsmanship and strength of character. Without question, LaBar meets these qualifications and can be counted on to attend this annual family reunion.

Thanks from the Public Affairs and Photo Team

As we close out this exciting week in Denver, the members of our Public Affairs and Photography Team want to thank all of the athletes and their families for supporting us here at the Games. We sincerely appreciate your willingness to allow us to tell your inspiring stories in our daily newsletter, on the Games Web site, in your hometown news releases and to media outlets all across the country.

Your courage and your athletic skills have dazzled us all as well – both professionally and personally. In fact, no member of this local and national team will leave the Games unaffected. Thank you for showing us your determination, strength of spirit, fortitude, sportsmanship, and steadfast resolve to succeed at every event and activity this past week. As so many of you have told us, “It’s all about ability, not disability.”

As we depart from the hotel and get on the airplanes tomorrow, remember the special week we enjoyed together in Denver. Next winter, when you're getting cabin fever from being inside, or perhaps just feeling down from the long lack of sunshine, remember the past week and put in your DVD from the Closing Ceremonies. It is sure to bring it all back to you – and you just won't be able to help smiling as you remember...

Safe travels home, everybody!

The National Veterans Wheelchair Games 2010 Public Affairs Team

Bringin' It to the Burgh

Next summer, the Wheelchair Games move from the Mile High City to the City of Champions...where heroes become legends.

Pittsburgh does nothing on a small scale: Home to nearly 450 bridges and birthplace of the Big Mac and the legendary coleslaw and French-fry-stuffed sandwiches, we are all about doing things big.

The 31st National Veterans Wheelchair Games will be no exception. VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System and the Keystone Chapter of Paralyzed Veterans of America are honored—and thrilled—to host the Games for a second time, August 1-6, 2011.

Here, cheering on athletes is as natural as breathing, and rooting for heroes, second nature. Our downtown boasts three professional sports stadiums—Heinz Field, the CONSOL Energy Center and PNC Park, where you're invited to spend an evening watching our Pirates play on one of the best baseball fields in America, while also taking in our spectacular skyline. You'll get an even closer view on our block party night, when you board the Gateway Clipper Fleet for a nighttime cruise on the three rivers that meet in the City of Bridges.

Visiting athletes will stay at the Westin Convention Center Hotel, conveniently connected to the David L. Lawrence Convention Center, the certified green facility where many events will take place. And you'll be a mere mile from The Strip, Pittsburgh's historic wholesale market district.

During your stay, you can indulge your artistic side with a visit to the Andy Warhol Museum, delve into the history of Heinz Ketchup, explore the Pittsburgh Zoo and PPG Aquarium, take in the sights and fragrant scents wafting through Phipps Conservatory and behold the landmark Cathedral of Learning before touring the Carnegie Museums. Our balmy summer is also ideal for discovering the dozens of parks throughout the biggest small city in America.

But we can't put on the best Games ever without you—the athletes! So sign up early for the 2011 Games! Registration begins in January; check the Games web site for updates at www.wheelchairgames.va.gov.

Can't wait to see yinz in the Burgh!

Thank You, Denver!

On behalf of the athletes and their families, coaches, officials, staff, volunteers and special guests, we extend our sincere gratitude to the local organizing committee from Denver. Employees from all of the Denver VA facilities and the Mountain State Chapter of Paralyzed Veterans of America devoted two years of tedious planning and continuous dedication to make sure that this week's Games were successful. From the delighted response received by athletes and their families throughout the week, the long hours and attention to detail have clearly paid off.

This week has given us exciting competitions and entertaining special events, including the Kick-off, Opening Ceremonies, Kids Day and team sports. The addition of this year's BBQ on Thursday and the kayaking exhibition added other elements to this year's Games.

Our local hosts have graciously welcomed us and clearly demonstrated Games with a Heart a Mile High. The enormous success of the 30th National Veterans Wheelchair Games would not have been possible without their continued concern and commitment.

We will take with us not only the special memories from the competitions, but also the feeling of kinship that comes from seeing old friends and making new ones. It is these experiences that we get from these Games that draw us back, year after year. Thank you, Denver, for making the 2010 National Veterans Wheelchair Games a truly memorable and special experience.

Departure Preparation

Tomorrow's Details:

- Buses to the airport depart from the corner of 15th and Welton Streets.
- Buses will operate from 3 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- You must load the bus to the airport four hours prior to your flight departure.
- Once you arrive at Denver International Airport, a volunteer will meet you at your airline ticketing station with your luggage and specialty chair(s).
- If your flight leaves after 8 p.m., you should catch the 4 p.m. bus or arrange your own transportation.
- Look for a flyer when you get on the bus for airport instructions.

Lost and Found: If you lost something during the Games, please contact Dave Hetherington at (303) 398-7183 to see if it was turned in.

Past Spirit of the Games Recipients:

Year	Name	Hometown
2009	* George Norton	Fairhaven, Mass.
2008	* Gustave "Gus" Sorenson	Sturtevant, Wis.
2007	* Philemon "Joe" Valesquez	Turlock, Calif.
2006	* Charles Allen	Cedar Hill, Texas
2005	* Orlando Perez	Augusta, Ga.
2004	* Gary Pearson	Seattle, Wash.
2003	Wayne Miller	Silver Spring, Md.
2002	† Ken Medieros	Taunton, Mass.
2001	Laura Schwanger	Elkins Park, Pa.
2000	Larry Hughes	Columbia, Md.
1999	† Ken Huber	Milan, Mich.
1998	Gil Garcia	San Antonio, Texas

1997	Robert ("Pat") Sapp	Rockwall, Texas
1996	* Holly Koester	Berea, Ohio
1995	* Penny Gillett	Fresno, Calif.
	James Torres	Caguas, P.R.
1994	* Tim Davis	Paso Robles, Calif.
1993	Hope Cooper	San Antonio, Texas
1992	Kater Cornwell	Charlotte, N.C.
1991	† Max Rhodes	Miami, Fla.
1990	* Mike Trujillo	Huntington Beach, Calif.
1989	* Jim Martinson	Puyallup, Wash.
1988	† Ken Wright	Palo Alto, Calif.
1987	Russ Monroe	Davison, Mich.

* Present at the 2010 Games

† Veteran has passed away