

Ski Gram Newsletter

April 1, 2011

Clinic a Road to the Paralympics

The surgeon general reports that more than 60% of adults in the United States do not engage in the recommended amount of physical activity. But for many Veterans attending the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic, staying active is more than a hobby, it's a way of life.

Frank Kozel had always lived an active life. That changed, however, when he lost his eyesight to macular degeneration. After a few years adjusting to his condition and learning to use his peripheral vision, Kozel decided enough was enough. A friend from a support group at the Louis Stokes VA Medical Center in Cleveland, Ohio, told him about the Winter Sports Clinic.

Kozel had never skied before, but he was determined to give it a try. He is 88 years old. "All you have to do is make up your mind and do it," says Kozel, an Army Veteran who saw combat in Normandy, Belgium and Germany during World War II.

It's that hard-nosed determination that carried Kozel to the top of the mountain for his first cross-country ski lesson. He is a quick study. "You need to stand up and bend forward slightly. You don't want to lean back because you'll fall. And don't look down at your skies, you want to keep your head up and focus on the horizon, on where you're going," says Kozel. Armed with his instructor's words, Kozel gave it his best shot. He fell a few times that first day, but had a very strong showing, according to his instructor Jim Roybal, who is also a visually impaired Veteran. "Frank was amazing, he picked it up real quick," says Roybal.

While at the Clinic, Kozel also spent time honing his archery skills at the range and tried scuba diving for the first time. If you're looking for him while he's at the Clinic, don't bother calling his hotel room, because he's rarely there. "We're not the type of people who hang around the room," says Kozel, referring to his friends from the blind support group. "You're never going to learn something new if you don't get out there and try new things."

Getting out and trying new things is a key aspect of the Clinic. It's equally important however to take the lessons learned on the mountain and apply them at home. As Kozel discovered, suffering an injury or illness is no reason to give up. In fact, it may be the greatest motivator to get out and lead an active, healthy life – and make the surgeon general proud. To this year's participants, Sandy poses this question: "Who among you will be the next to break down your personal barriers and represent our country in the next Paralympics?"

Departure Info

Sadly, our week is rapidly drawing to a close and it's now time to start packing and heading for home. Below is some information to help make your departure as smooth and hassle-free as possible. Travel plans may change due to weather and other unforeseen circumstances. Check with your team leaders for the latest information.

Returning Borrowed Medical Equipment Caregivers are responsible for returning the Clinic's medical equipment. On Friday, return equipment to the Silvertree's Cabaret Room between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. On Saturday, equipment can be returned in the Silvertree's Eldorado Room A from 6 a.m. until 3 p.m.

Wheelchairs All wheelchairs require tags be attached on the day of travel. An airline customer service agent at the ticket counter will attach tags upon arrival at the airport.

Bring Your Medicine! Travelers should make sure they have at least a three-day supply of their medications in their carry-on baggage.

Forgotten Items If you forgot something at the Silvertree, call the bell desk at (970) 923-8252. The bell captain will work to locate the item, and if found, make arrangements for its return. (Guests will be responsible for shipping charges.)

Advance Check-in United Airlines is offering advance check-in today, from 2 to 8 p.m. in the Eldorado Room B for those departing from the Aspen Airport tomorrow. This is a convenient opportunity to check your baggage and receive your boarding passes a day in advance. Make sure to bring a government issued photo I.D. Boarding passes can only be issued up to 24 hours in advance.

Clinic Bonds Know No Bounds

There are Veterans and volunteers at the Winter Sports Clinic who have traveled long distances to attend. Each year, the Clinic generally sees participants from nearly all 50 states. But only one group has to pack their passports.

Bob Gilmour has been leading a team of Canadian ski instructors to the Winter Sports Clinic for the past 17 years. "It's great!" he says. "I love the people! We love the Vets here."

This year, Gilmour has a team of 11 Canadian ski instructors with him. Each is as excited and motivated as he is. "The first time I came, I just fell in love with it," said instructor Dan Fleming. "I've learned more in the four years I've been coming to this event than in the 15 years I've been an instructor in Canada."

Gilmour and his team arrive each year, paying for the majority of the trip out of their own pockets, eager to provide assistance to the Veteran participants. "We get an immense satisfaction working with these Vets," said Bob Hodson, an instructor and 30 year Veteran of the Canadian Army. "Four hours on the mountain goes fast. It isn't always enough. But even if all we get is a smile, it's worth it."

The Canadian team is an integral part of the instructor core for the Winter Sports Clinic and their support is relied upon each year. "We love those guys," says Sandy Trombetta, Director of the Winter Sports Clinic. "Their participation here is huge for us."

And the feeling is mutual. Gilmour is quick to point out the incredible benefit the Clinic has had for Vets in Canada. "I have to give huge credit to this program. We have learned so much here."

In fact, the Winter Sports Clinic was the blueprint for Soldier On, the Canadian version of the event. The Canadian instructors use their experience at the Winter Sports Clinic as an opportunity to see equipment, learn how the program operates, and brainstorm ways to implement the lessons they've learned here into Soldier On. "We are able to come here, look at equipment, learn about what works best and translate that into our events back in Canada," said Hodson.

It's that spirit of collaboration and partnership that makes programs like the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic and Soldier On so successful. Our gratitude goes to our Neighbors from the North!

To learn more about the Soldier On program, visit their website at <http://www.cfpsa.com/en/corporate/SoldierOn/index.asp>.

Closing Ceremonies

Be sure to attend the Closing Ceremonies and Victory Celebration tonight beginning at 7 p.m. in the Conference Center Ballroom. Terry Atienza, Director of the VA Medical Center in Grand Junction, will serve as Master of Ceremonies for tonight's program.

Special guests include Steve Muro, Acting Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs from the Department of Veterans Affairs and Mike Walsh, National Director of Voluntary Services from the DAV.

Presented tonight will be the Sid Ford Award, the Judy Shawo Commitment to Excellence Award and the Linnie Howard Spirit Award. The DAV Freedom Award will also be presented to one deserving Veteran selected for courage, perseverance and determination on these spectacular

mountains. Sandy Trombetta, founder and director of the Winter Sports Clinic, will present the coveted participant awards including Best Face Plant.

Our time among the peaks of the Rocky Mountains may be coming to a close, but the experiences, new-found strength, and friendships will continue for years to come

From Snow to Sun

As you can see from our April Fool's Day Cover, the Winter Sports Clinic has a sister clinic. If you've enjoyed this week here in Snowmass then maybe Surfing, Sailing, Kayaking, Cycling and Track & Field events are for you. Registration for the 4th annual National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic held in San Diego, California from September 18 – 23 is currently open. Veterans who are newly injured from amputations, traumatic brain injuries, post-traumatic stress disorder and other neurological disorders can apply now. Additional information and registration information can be found at www.summersportsclinic.va.gov or you can contact Tristan Heaton at (858) 642-6426.

Students Volunteer

The Clinic not only inspires its participants to do more, but it also inspires the community around it as well.

More than 25 students from the Aspen High School football and lacrosse teams are volunteering their time to help at the Clinic.

Lead by their coach, Ron Morehead, the students are helping shuttle participant's luggage to and from the Pitkin County Airport for the second year.

Morehead learned of the Clinic last year through an acquaintance who works with the local Elks and wanted to contribute. He saw this as an opportunity for the kids on his teams. "Kids today come by things very easily but they don't necessarily give back," says Morehead. "This is a chance for them to get involved and help."

Morehead says the students have also gotten a lot back from being involved with the Clinic. So much so that Matt Ferguson volunteered more of his time to help at the Aspen Ice Rink with the sled hockey activity. "He loves hockey," says Morehead, "and he loves helping the Vets."

Allison Campbell from the Silvertree Hotel, who works with the students, says they are a godsend. "It's a tremendous effort moving over 700 pieces of luggage," Campbell says. "We couldn't do this without their help."

So when your luggage is waiting for you at your destination, make sure to give a nod to the Aspen High School football and lacrosse teams.

Thank you

A sincere thank you to the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic's 2011 Local Organizing Committee (listed below) for another wonderful event. From the Taste of Snowmass and Opening Ceremonies to the exciting events of Race Day, their hard work and dedication shines through for our Veterans. Thanks all for making us all feel so welcome.

Sandy Trombetta, *Director, Winter Sports Clinic*

Teresa Parks, *Clinic Operations Director*

Jose Llamas, *Public Affairs Coordinator*

Dennis Abens, *Host Room Coordinator*

Allen Baugh, *Team Leader Coordinator*

Henry Bullock, *Transportation Coordinator*

Jill Cordova, *Continuing Education Coordinator*

Shane Elliott, *Communications Coordinator*

Dr. John Hunter, *Medical Director*

Lori Mead, *Medical Room Co-Coordinator*
Wendy Shingleton, *Medical Room Co-Coordinator*
Mary Lane, *Food & Beverage Coordinator*
Gig Leadbetter, *Cross Country Instructor Coordinator*
Matt Lucas, *Equipment Coordinator*
Barry Sharp, *Bootloader Coordinator*
Annie Tuttle, *Alternate Activities Coordinator*
Pat White, *Ski Instructor Coordinator*

What Are You Saying?

Describe Sandy Trombetta in one word...

Martha Barnett

US Army

Los Angeles, CA

“Committed...or, should be.”

Mike Guilbault

US Air Force

Attleboro, MA

“Inspirational.”

Dave Riley

US Coast Guard

Mobile, AL

“Visionary.”

Selemani Johnson

US Navy

Dallas, TX

“Genius.”

Fred Garraway

US Army

Killeen, TX

“Indescribable.”

Prosthetics Post

The Prosthetics Post is the place to get the answers for your most frequently asked prosthetics questions.

Dear PDP,

I am a 100% service-connected Veteran and was recently rated by VBA for the Automobile Adaptive Equipment Program. What can I get to adapt my vehicle?

Sincerely, Back in Driver's Seat

Dear BDS:

Benefits through the Automobile Adaptive Equipment (AAE) Program help physically challenged serviced connected Veterans to enter, exit, and/or operate a motorized vehicle. The VA is able to provide equipment such as hand controls, platform wheelchair lifts, power door openers, and other adaptive driving systems.

MASSAGE

Complimentary massages are available, by appointment; from 1 - 4 p.m. and 6 - 9 p.m. Massage is located in the Elbert room in the Silvertree Hotel. Please call (970) 430-9373 to schedule an appointment.

WHEELCHAIR AND PROSTHETICS REPAIR

Located at the Host Room in the Conference Center.

Hours are:

6:30 a.m. - 8:45 a.m.

11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

4 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.

In between these hours this person (Don) can be reached @ 970-430-9417. Please do not call after 6 p.m. unless it is an emergency. If you need to contact the Prosthetics Repair person (Joe) please call 970-430-9415.

Medical Room

For emergencies dial 911

Medical room phone:

(970) 923-8330

Location

The medical room is located in the Bedford A conference room, one level below the mall, across the street from the Mountain Chalet Hotel. Stairway access from the mall is next to *Christy Sports*.

Wheelchair access is by elevator at the far end of the mall above the bus terminal.

Transport

Van transport is available from the Silvertree Hotel to the medical room. Find the medical van in the front of the hotel or call the medical room to arrange transportation.

After Hours

Call the medical room for recorded instructions on how to contact the "on call" medical provider. If unsuccessful, call the hotel operator.

Menu

Don't forget you'll have Taste of Snowmass for your afternoon meal. You'll need your entree and dessert vouchers!

Connect With VA

Don't forget we're using new social media tools to provide you with content about the Winter Sports Clinic you can't find anywhere else!

Follow the links at www.va.gov, or find us at:

YouTube:

www.youtube.com/DeptVetAffairs

Twitter:

@NDVWSC

Facebook:

www.facebook.com/VeteransAffairs

Flickr:

[flickr.com/photos/veteransaffairs](https://www.flickr.com/photos/veteransaffairs)

Event Schedule

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| 6:30 – 8:30 a.m. | Breakfast: Conference Center Ballroom |
| 7 – Noon | Host Room |
| 8 – 11 a.m. | Race – Spider Sabich Race Center/Nastar Course |
| 8 a.m. – Noon | Cross Country Race Day (Top of the Village) |
| 10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. | Medal Presentations: Snowmass Village Mall |
| 11:30 a.m. – 2 p.m. | Taste of Snowmass: Snowmass Village Mall |
| 1p.m. | Race – Spider Sabich Race Center |
| 7 p.m. | Closing Ceremonies: Conference Center Ballroom |