

# Summit Newsletter

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Friday Issue, March 30, 2012

## Vietnam Veterans Welcome Home Day

Today is Vietnam Veterans Welcome Home Day.

March 30 is recognized around the country as a time to reflect, a day of commemoration, and an opportunity to pay respect to Veterans of the Vietnam War. On this day in 1973 all U.S. troops withdrew from Vietnam under the terms of the Treaty of Paris.

Let's make a special effort at the Winter Sports Clinic to tell our Vietnam Veterans "Welcome home."

## A Portrait of Rehab

Athletics were always a big part of Matt Stitzel's lifestyle. Stitzel is a Navy Veteran currently living in Boise, ID., who says competing meant the world to him. His interest in running culminated in him winning the 1980 Robie Creek Half Marathon, which is known as the toughest race in the northwest.

Stitzel is proud of his military career, he started in Officer Candidate School in Newport, RI. During his time on active duty, he served as the Supply Officer on the SSN 686 Fast Attack Submarine Group.

After leaving the service he was injured in a motor vehicle pedestrian accident on October 16, 1990, and he sustained a traumatic brain injury. Stitzel was in a coma for over six weeks. The adjustment to, and rehabilitation from, his injuries was a slow and frustrating process.

Now Stitzel is participating in his third National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic. As he says, "the clinic is helping me to start living again, as athletics used to be such a big part of my life. The better you can handle life physically, the better life you can have."

When you speak with Stitzel he always appears very serious, but he says that is just him trying to concentrate on what somebody is asking. He has a lively sense of humor that jumps out as the conversation carries on.

His involvement in the Winter Sports Clinic has led him to try other activities back home in Boise. Stitzel summed it up by saying, "skiing parallels recovery because as you learn to make one turn, then you start planning for the next one, you keep building skills and confidence as you go."

## A Reason to Smile!

What a week it has been. It started with fear or anxiety for a few of you. Others felt immediately at home, enjoying the camaraderie of seeing old friends and making new ones. Hopefully, each of you had the opportunity to push yourselves beyond what you thought possible. And in doing so, you found a passion to elevate your game, and your life, to new heights.

Sure, we come here to have fun, and I've seen a lot of smiles this week. And that's a good thing. We smile because we're proud of ourselves and what we've accomplished. As a former member of the US National Amputee Hockey Team, I know firsthand how important it is to push the envelope and get outside your comfort zone, both personally and professionally. And, yes, you can have a blast along the way.

See, this Clinic is more than just learning a new sport. It's about the entire rehab process. It's about healing our bodies and our minds. The biggest take-away for me is the importance of setting goals, making a plan and sticking with it. Whether it's starting a business, landing a job, quitting the smokes, or setting a personal best on the bench press – goals keep us moving. And when we're moving, we focus on what we can do, not what we can't.

That's the idea behind our new office motto – Mission ReDefined. We are going to redefine how we engage Veterans in adaptive sports. And it is our hope that along the way, you will redefine your objectives and potential. One of the ways we want to do this is through adaptive sport programs in your communities. This way, you can take the lessons learned here on the mountain and take that feeling of accomplishment back home and build it even further.

Our Web site has all the tools and resources you'll need, whether you're a Veteran, family member, or VA staff: [www.va.gov/adaptivesports/](http://www.va.gov/adaptivesports/). One feature developed by our partners at the US Paralympics is a national sport club finder. This is a tool that all Veterans can use regardless of age or ability. Just type in your zip code and it will generate a list of adaptive sport programs in your community. If nothing comes up through the Web site, let me know by e-mailing [michael.welch5@va.gov](mailto:michael.welch5@va.gov) and we'll see what other resources are available.

Participating in adaptive sports means more independence, less stress and more fun. To put it simply, disabled Veterans who play sports tend to be healthier and happier.

As the Clinic comes to a close, I ask each Veteran to take a moment to think about what you've done here – all that you've accomplished – and find a way to keep it going once you get home. To the VA staff here at the Clinic, thank you for your dedication to serving Veterans. You are the ones that motivate and encourage Veterans on a daily basis. If you are interested in starting an adaptive sport clinic at your facility, contact my office via e-mail [vacoadaptiveSP@va.gov](mailto:vacoadaptiveSP@va.gov) for information and resources.

Semper Fidelis

Christopher J. Nowak, National Director, VA Office of National Veterans Sports Programs and Special Events

### **From The Publics Affairs Team**

The public affairs team wants to sincerely thank each and every one of you for sharing your stories with us this week. While we can't always feature everyone in the newsletter or online, we love spending time with you and hearing what you have to say.

Just because the Winter Sports Clinic is coming to a close doesn't mean the impact of what happened here this week will end. We will continue to run new stories on the Winter Sports Clinic website every month throughout the year, and feature photos and videos on VA and DAV's social media sites, such as @VAadaptivesport and National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic on Facebook.

We want to hear from you! Send your stories and ideas to [anthony.hardman@va.gov](mailto:anthony.hardman@va.gov) throughout the year, so we can keep the message going.

Thank you all for your service, see you next year!

Anthony Hardman

Winter Sports Clinic Public Affairs Coordinator

### **Question of the Day : How are you going to take what you learned at the clinic home with you?**

Jenny Maher Menrico, VA Air Force

"Since my injury this is the first time I have woken up excited to start the day. I am amazed at the adaptive sports I can do and will try and find those events back home"

Fred Schutz Oconomowoc, WI Coast Guard

"I am going to take home a positive attitude and keep re-connecting with other Veterans"

Mark McClellan Portland, OR Marines

"To spread the spirit of the clinic back home and to encourage others with disabilities to get involved. The clinic is spectacular"

Erick Hernandez Miami, FL Navy

"Number one I will work harder so I can do better next time. Number two I will work hard on getting younger Veterans to come and join us"

Roy Aquina Fairfield, CA Navy

"Participation in adaptive sports helps me in many functional ways, it helps me get a better sense of balance, keeps me exercising and it helps me to meet people"

## Closing Ceremonies

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

Special guests include Will Gunn, Department of Veterans Affairs General Counsel.

And Donald Samuels, Disabled American Veterans National Commander.

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.

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.

## Sponsor Thanks

What a great week! From the incredible events to the food and the entertainment, 2012 was a Winter Sports Clinic to remember! The National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic could not happen without the generous support of our many sponsors. They selflessly give, year after year, to ensure that we can put a world-class event together for the disabled Veterans that attend. So from the Department of Veterans Affairs and the DAV, and on behalf of every Veteran who experienced this year's clinic, thank you to each and every sponsor for your support of America's disabled Veterans.

Please return all lift tickets to the sponsor room.

## Thank You Ladies

The Food and Beverage Coordinators for the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic would like to thank Dixie Aljets (top left) and Mary Lane (bottom left) for over 50 years of combined service. Both women will retire after this year's clinic. We wish you both the best and thank you for all your hard work.

## Prosthetic Daily

Dear PDP -

I am a 100% service-connected Veteran and recently was accepted into the Automobile Adaptive Equipment Program. What can I get?

Regards, Looking-4- Info

Dear LAI:

Congrats – this is good news! Benefits through the Automobile Adaptive Equipment (AAE) Program help folks get in, get out and/or operate a vehicle. VA is able to provide equipment such as platform wheelchair lifts, power door openers, hand controls, and other driving systems. VA can also provide reimbursements for standard equipment related to your service connected disability, like air conditioning if you have a high level SCI. Don't fret non-service connected Veterans. You can still potentially get adaptive equipment that will allow you to safely get in and out of your vehicle. Don't hesitate to contact your local Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Service for additional information on auto adaptive support.

## Schedule for Friday, March 30

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| 6:30 a.m.–8:30 a.m.  | Breakfast: Conference Center Ballroom          |
| 7:00 a.m.–9:00 a.m.  | Host Room                                      |
| 9:00 a.m.–1:30 p.m.  | Race – Spider Sabich Race Center/Nastar Course |
| 8:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. | Cross Country Race Day (TOV)                   |
| 10:30 a.m.–2:00 p.m. | Medal Presentations: Snowmass Village Mall     |
| 11:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m. | Taste of Snowmass: Snowmass Village Mall       |
| 7:00 p.m.            | Closing Ceremonies: Conference Center Ballroom |

## DEPARTURE INFORMATION

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 6 p.m. in the Eldorado Room on the 4th floor of the Silvertree, 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. Anything not received in advance, such as boarding passes or checked items, must be processed at the airport on your day of travel.

## Odds and Ends

### FRIDAYS BREAKFAST BUFFET

Fresh Sliced Seasonal Melons & Fruits

Oatmeal with Granola, Raisins, Almonds, Skim Milk & Bananas

Scrambled Eggs

Croissants, Muffins and Biscuits

Biscuits and Gravy

Bacon

Ham

Breakfast Potatoes

Freshly Brewed Coffee, Decaf Coffee, and Celestial Seasonings

Hot Teas & Assortment of  
Chilled Juices, Tomatoe Juice

Salsa & Hot Sauce

## 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. successful, call the hotel operator.

## **CORRECTION**

In Thursdays issue, Reynaldo Torres was identified as a U.S. Air Force Vet. He’s a U.S. Navy Vet.