

Summit Newsletter

Thursday Issue, March 29, 2012

Veterans Helping Veterans

By Donald L. Samuels, National Commander, Disabled American Veterans

Those of you here at the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic are a heartwarming sight for those of us deeply involved with our nation's Veterans programs. For 26 years, the DAV has joined with the VA to offer this clinic of rehabilitation and confidence-building for the men and women who have served and sacrificed for our country.

Many of you know about the DAV, and I hope that most of you, if not all, are members, because we are truly an organization of Veterans helping Veterans. Our outreach is substantial, and what we do in support of our fellow disabled Veterans can fill volumes. We are a 92-year-old Veterans service organization founded by a group of World War I Veterans who believed that those who sacrifice in service to America wholly deserve the benefits earned on the battlefield.

What you may not know is our commitment to each of you. Through the Winter Sports Clinic, we help Veterans like you overcome the effects of severe disability. We encourage Veterans to take control of their lives and move in directions they might never have dreamed possible. It's remarkable to watch it happen on the slopes of a Colorado mountainside. What you are doing here is empowering yourselves, and I am so very proud of your accomplishments.

I hope all of our Veterans here are finding this an amazing event, but it is only one of our amazing programs to building better lives for disabled Veterans and their families and survivors. Another is our National Service program. Our corps of professional National Service Officers, all disabled Veterans, work with Veterans on claims for disability compensation and health care for injuries. All of our services are free of charge. Again, we are Veterans helping Veterans, and you are our sole priority. Last year alone, we represented 250,000 Veterans with their VA disability claims.

The DAV is an organization that can help you achieve your dreams despite the reality of disability. We work for you within Congress, VA and other federal agencies. Our membership of 1.2 million disabled Veterans ensures that your benefits will not be threatened during economic downturns or your health care will not be shortchanged by funding cutbacks.

I hope you take home a sense of renewed confidence that while your life has been changed, it is not unchangeable. Set your goals high and exceed your personal limits. I encourage you to join the DAV helping your fellow Veterans. Our nation is proud of you, and your fellow Veterans from previous wars see you as they once were — fearful of the future, but filled with remarkable confidence that any goal that you can envision is attainable. Do so as a DAV member.

Curling

Curling Takes Off At the Clinic

"Good curling" was the greeting of the day at the Aspen Ice Rink Monday afternoon as a group of 16 Veterans made their way to the ice for a lesson in curling.

The sport, which originated in Scotland in the 1500's, is great for people of all ages and abilities, according to John West, a curling instructor from the Broadmoor Curling Club near Colorado Springs. West has been curling for more than 5 decades, and his passion is clear as he talks about adaptive curling.

West compares curling to golf and explains that in the sport, the player pushes a 42-pound chunk of granite, called a "stone", about 120 feet down a lane of ice, called a "sheet" and try to have it stop inside a target area, called the "house". It sounds a little complicated with all the fancy terms, but it's actually pretty easy – and fun.

Some in the audience seem a little apprehensive. Steve Sanner, a Marine Corps Veteran who served in Vietnam, is trying to figure out how to hit the house when he can't even see it. "I lost my eyesight three years ago," explains

Sanner, who lives near Salt Lake City. But he's willing to give it a try, and that's enough to motivate West and his team of instructors.

Sanner made his way to the ice and received instructions from his coach, Rusty Schieber, who is the assistant coach for the US Paralympic curling team. He grips a handle and launches his stone. It glides down the ice, landing 20 feet short of the house. "I didn't shove it too hard, so I think I can get there next time," he says with a look of determination.

On the next lane, West is coaching Pete Ricotta, an Air Force Veteran. Ricotta, who lives in Buffalo, New York, tried curling once before at the Albany Curling Club and is eager to give it another go. He wheels up to the line, sets his sights on the button and drives his handle forward. His stone glides down the sheet, stopping short of his mark. "I took a little bit off that one," he says, clearly dissatisfied. "I'm not doing very well."

West is quick to seize a coaching moment and assures Ricotta that he has a trick that will help. "We just need to align your chair with the target and get you in a better position," he says, helping Ricotta move into a new position.

Instructor Jorgette Krsulic points out that curling is a great sport for Veterans like Sanner and Ricotta. "Curling lends itself to adaptability – the ice is the great equalizer," she explains.

Since the sport was introduced to the Clinic in 2007, West and his team have taught 247 Veterans how to curl. To sign up for a lesson, stop by the Alternate Activities desk outside the host room and "Good Curling".

Journey to Paralympics

While serving in a support role assisting U.S. Navy Seals in Afghanistan in 2004, Navy Veteran Chris Clemons life would change forever.

His team began taking on small arms fire and the next thing he knew a rocket propelled grenade exploded in their camp. Similar to the stories of many Veterans here at the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic, Clemons sustained a traumatic brain injury and began a long road to recovery and rehabilitation.

Recovery was never easy and often filled with setbacks. Like many other Veterans he struggled to find his way in this new life.

Clemons first big step toward regaining self-confidence began in 2009 when he attending the Winter Sports Clinic. "Skiing is a great stress reliever for me," Clemons said. "It gives me freedom and let's my disability go the wayside."

Though Clemons made great strides toward rehabilitation, he would face great challenge once again.

One year ago, Clemons found himself at a crossroads weighing 298 pounds and finding himself living a sedentary lifestyle.

"My life was just not going right," Clemons said.

Ready to make a change, he connected with Arizona Disabled Sports and the Military Sports Boot Camp. After that his eyes began to open. A former college track and field athlete, he finally found that he could compete again.

Today he weighs less than 200 pounds and his life is in order. He is quick to give credit to a long list of trainers, coaches and other people that have reached out to help him along the way.

Clemons is now on schedule to compete in the 2012 Paralympics in the 100 and 200-meter sprints and the long jump. He said he almost broke down in tears when the USA box arrived at his home with his Paralympics uniform.

"I am so proud to wear a different uniform representing my country. It was a privilege to wear the military uniform and now again to wear the Paralympics uniform."

Clemons is happy to be an ambassador for the USA Paralympics Team. He has enjoyed his interactions with all of the Veterans at the 2012 National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic and recognizes that his journey began here on the mountain. His message for his fellow Veterans is simple: "Do every step, every single day that you need to do to get better. Give 125 percent effort. Keep your goals in mind and always remember there is somebody else who is worse off."

Question of the Day: What did you learn in the military that helped you move forward in life?

Kyle Kienitz Appleton, WI

Marines

“Adapt and overcome was engrained into my brain”

Terri Fula St. Louis, MO

Air Force

“Adapt, overcome, adjust”

Glenn McClary Jacksonville, NC

Marines

“Stay strong and stay positive”

Eugene Gold Waialua, HI

Army

“Don’t give up, keep going”

Davis Celestine Tampa, FL

Navy

“Preparation is the key, always be prepared”

Are you on Twitter?

Each day, we’ll ask a question about the clinic using hash tag #NDVWSC. Follow @VAADAPTIVESPORT and join the conversation!

VOTE!

Swing by the Conference Center Lobby to place your votes for the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic Awards! Categories include Most Excellent Coach, Ski Instructor Extraordinaire, Best Face Plant and the Spirit Award. Awards will be presented at closing ceremonies Friday night.

Departing on Friday March 30th?

For any participants departing Friday March 30th, there will be school buses in front of the Silvertree hotel every hour on the half hour starting at 5:30 a.m.

Educational Workshops

Throughout the week, several workshops will be offered to help participants and clinicians cope with the challenges Veterans with disabilities experience in everyday life. Classes include a number of different topics, from how to continue leading active and healthy lives to self-defense for everyone. Participants are encouraged to attend one, or all of these insightful workshops, which have been created with your needs in mind.

THURSDAY March 29, 2012

- 3:00 – 4:30 p.m. “Geocaching: Finding Treasures with a GPS”
Aspenwood Meeting Room, Fall Lane
Presented by Elizabeth Sharp, Ph.D.
- 6:00 – 7:30 p.m. “Promoting Health and Preventing Disease”
Aspenwood Meeting Room, Fall Lane
Presented by Sophia Hurley, MSPT; Lynn Novorska, RD, LDN; Sue Diamond RN, MSN
- 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. “Self Defense for the Visually Impaired”
Max Park Room, Wildwood Hotel
Presented by Special Agent Mark Copanzzì, United States Secret Service

Prosthetic Daily

Dear PDP: I lost my leg in Afghanistan (ok...so it wasn't actually “lost” but you know what I mean). When I was still active duty, I got state-of-the-art prosthetic limbs. What can I expect now that I am a Veteran and will be getting my amputation care through the VA?

Fondly, Need-A-Good-Leg

Dear N-A-G-L: Good news! You can expect to receive the same state-of-the-art technologies from the VA as those you received while active duty. VA has a long-standing, established history of providing exceptional comprehensive services for Veterans with amputations. Regardless of when the Vet was injured or whether he/she is service-connected (SC) or non-service connected (NSC), VA will provide the best limbs available. The VA has recently set-up the “Amputation System of Care” which ensures that all Veterans with amputations receive the best possible care and technologies. Rest assured, the VA will take good care of you! For more information, check out our website at www.Prosthetics.va.gov

Schedule for Thursday, March 29

6:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.	Host Room: Conference Center
6:30 a.m.–8:30 a.m.	Breakfast: Conference Center Ballroom
8:00 a.m.–11:30 a.m.	Snowmobiling: T Lazy 7 Ranch (Loads @ 7:00 a.m. & 9:15 a.m.)
8:30 a.m.–11:30 a.m.	Skiing Downhill: Baby Ruth, Showcase, Fast Draw
9:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.	Cross Country Skiing, Snowshoeing, Biathlon Introduction (Top of the Village) (Lunch Elks BBQ at TOV) (Loads @ 8:20 a.m. & 1:00 p.m.)
9:00 a.m.–11:00 a.m.	Kayaking: Pool, Wildwood Lodge Sled Hockey: Lewis Ice Arena, Aspen (Loads @ 7:45 a.m.)
9:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m.	Glenwood Springs Trip, Lunch at Elks Lodge, Hot Springs (Loads @ 9:30 a.m.)
10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.	Scuba Diving: Pool, Silver Tree Hotel Rock-Climbing: Conference Center Circle
10:30 a.m.–4:00 p.m.	Aspen Trip, Lunch at Elks Lodge, Aspen Mountain Gondola Ride (Loads @ 10:00 a.m.)
11:15 a.m.–1:00 p.m.	Lunch: Conference Center Ballroom
11:30 a.m.–4:00 p.m.	Shooting Sports/Archery: Basalt Trap Club (Loads @ 10:00 a.m.)
12:30 p.m.–3:30 p.m.	Skiing Downhill: Bear Bottom, Head Wall, Lodge Pole
1:00 p.m.–3:00 p.m.	Rock-Climbing: Conference Center Circle
1:30 p.m.–3:30 p.m.	Curling: Aspen Ice Rink (Loads @ 12:45 p.m.)
2:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m.	Scuba Diving: Pool, Silver Tree Hotel Kayaking: Pool, Wildwood Lodge
3:00 p.m.–4:30 p.m.	CEU Educational Workshop: “Geocaching: Finding Treasures with a GPS” Aspenwood Meeting Room, Fall Lane Presented by, Elizabeth Sharp, Ph.D.
4:15 p.m.–5:00 p.m.	Ski Instructor Meeting: Eldorado Room, Silver Tree Hotel
4:45 p.m.	Team Leader Meeting: Conference Center Steps
6:00 p.m.–7:30 p.m.	CEU Educational Workshop: “Promoting Health and Preventing Disease” Aspenwood Meeting Room, Fall Lane Presented by, Sophia Hurley, MSPT; Lynn Novorska, RD, LDN; Sue Diamond RN, MSN
6:30 p.m.–8:00 p.m.	Instructional Workshop: “Self Defense for the Visually Impaired” Max Park Room Wildwood Hotel Presented by: Special Agent Mark Copanzzzi, United States Secret Service
8:00 p.m.–11:00 p.m.	Entertainment: Conference Center Ballroom JakartA Band

Odds and Ends

THURSDAYS BREAKFAST BUFFET

Fresh Sliced Seasonal Melons & Fruits

Christine & Robb’s Oatmeal with Granola, Raisins, Almonds, Skim Milk & Bananas

Sliced Zucchini, Banana Nut & Poppy Seed Bread served w/whipped butter & natural fruit preserves (no Coffee Cake)

Sausage Patties, Bacon, Breakfast Potatoes

Omelet Station-to Include Ham, Cheese, Mushrooms, Peppers, Tomatoes, Onions, and Salsa.

Freshly Brewed Coffee, Decaf Coffee, and Celestial Seasonings

Hot Teas & Assortment of Chilled Juices

THURSDAYS LUNCH BUFFET

Chicken & Beef Tacos
Vegetarian Taco sauted Vegetables
Soft & Hard Shells

Shredded cheese, Salsa, Sour Cream, Guacamole, Refried Beans
& Spanish Rice

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.

TRANSPORTATION

Event	Load
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Snowmobiling

First Trip	7:00 a.m.
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Second Trip	9:00 a.m.
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Please make sure to load at the correct time
for your assigned trip.

Sled Hockey	7:45 a.m.
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Cross Country Skiing

First Trip	8:20 a.m.
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Shuttle Bus	12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.
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Hot Springs	9:30 a.m.
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Shooting Sports	10:00 a.m.
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Aspen Gondola	10:00 a.m.
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Curling	12:45 p.m.
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