

Ski Gram

THURSDAY EDITION • APRIL 1, 2010 (No Joke!)

Man & Woman's Best Friend

Assistance dogs
and their owners

STUDENTS TURN TEACHERS

Previous Clinic participants
now inspiring others

Cactus Jack Takes the Stage Tonight



the STUDENT becomes the TEACHER

True Clinic success stories, two participants move on to inspire and teach others.

The Winter Sports Clinic is an inspiring event for anyone associated with it. For some, it's a reminder of the tenacity of the human spirit. For others, it inspires a new passion for sports. For two participants, they've absorbed so much at the Clinic that they've now become instructors, and work to instill that Clinic hope and inspiration in others.

When you ask disabled Army Veteran Chris Jefferson about monoskiing, his entire face changes. His eyes light up as he talks about the freedom of cruising down a mountain. It reminds him, he says, of the days when he used to ride his motorcycle.

Jefferson got serious about skiing as a participant at his first Winter Sports Clinic in 1994. He learned the technical aspects of the sport, but he also learned how it can change a person's perspective. "I loved the camaraderie of the Clinic and learning what kind of options were available to me," Jefferson said. "It really helped me become a more upbeat person."

Jefferson became a certified ski instructor in 2004, and now spends his time on the slopes teaching others how to experience that freedom. For him, it was an important way to help his fellow disabled Veterans. "That's my favorite part of being a ski instructor," he says. "I love watching these younger guys' faces light up the first time they experience the independence of skiing."

One of Chris' students, Army Veteran Luke Murphy, agrees. "Being on the ski, all alone with no one holding you up, it really gives you a sense of freedom," he said.

Throughout his instructing career, Jefferson estimates helping 40 disabled skiers learn the sport, including Serbia's first Paralympian Jasmin Bambur. His favorite students though, are fellow Veterans at the Winter Sports Clinic.

Three years ago Lewis Stamatelos was lost in the bars of New England, wondering where he would go or what worth he still possessed. The former Marine caught a



Army veteran Luke Murphy enjoys the sense of freedom that skiing gives him.

sniper bullet in Iraq, flat-lined four times on the operating table and left the service with no use of his right hand, a traumatic brain injury and impairment of his right lung.

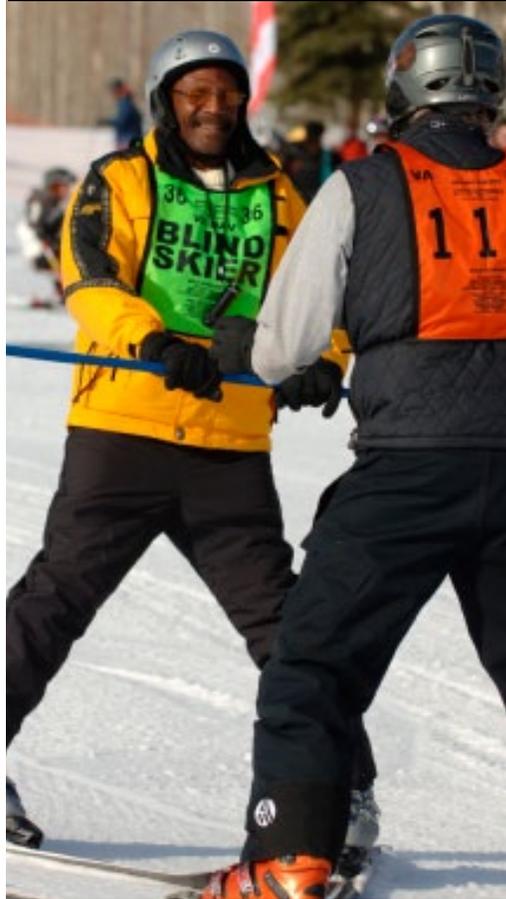
Last year, Lewis attended the Winter Sports Clinic for the first time. This year, he returned as an instructor, hoping to instill the same direction and hope in fellow Veterans he found through rehabilitative sports.

"Three years ago, the voluntary service chief at the Boston VA Medical Center told me about a winter sports clinic in New Hampshire," Stamatelos said. "I tried it and it was all it took to get me out of the bars and going again."

Now, Lewis is a regular volunteer instructor in snowboarding and kayaking for the New England Handicapped Sports Association. He studies political science at New England College and this week, he's carving up the slopes while showing other Veterans how it's done.

"It's different as an instructor than as a participant last year," Stamatelos said. "Now I get to have my fun but I also get to see someone else excel, which is twice the fun for me. I see a Vietnam Veteran smiling after trying this for the first time and I see myself three years ago. It's powerful stuff. It's awesome."

Blind Skiers Tackle Bigger CHALLENGES



Skiing down a hill for the first time is a daunting experience. Skiing down a hill with vision impairment presents an even bigger challenge.

First time Clinic participant and Navy Veteran Lawrence Giddens said that standing on skis for the first time was exhilarating and fun. He has macular degeneration.

At 6 feet 7 inches tall, Giddens said the biggest challenge learning to ski with vision impairment is maintaining balance. Just as he was learning to stop on his skis, gravity brought him down. "Seeing little kids go by on skis motivated me," he said.

Both Giddens and George Pyle, a 75-year-old Army Veteran who also has macular degeneration, said the instructors are the key to success.

Veterans are attached by tethers to instructors who ski alongside or behind to guide them. "I have confidence in the instructors. They help build my confidence," said Pyle.

"It may take two or three trips down the hill to get the hang of it, but the idea is to slowly work our way off the tethers with the instructors who then ski next to or behind you," Pyle said. "It may seem impossible, but it's not."

Paralympics

Clinic participants are extended a special invitation to attend the 2010 Developing Amazing Leaders Paralympic Conference, April 30 – May 3 at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colo.

The goal of the conference is to provide coaches, therapists, educators and other interested parties the tools to implement a successful Paralympic sports program in their communities. Interactive sessions offer opportunities to build a new program, or grow a program currently running. The basics of a variety of Paralympic sports will be taught and sessions will help develop leadership skills.

For more information, contact amazingleaders@usoc.org.

Vets: It's not just about you.

Veterans today confront many issues, both physical and emotional. Often overlooked are the effects of these issues on a Veteran's relationship with others.

Tonight, married couple Chad (a disabled Veteran) and Betty Ann Colley, share their experiences with Chad's injuries and provide advice to others facing a similar situation. Betty Ann says, "Our discoveries came over 42 years, and we look forward to sharing with other couples what worked and what didn't."

"Marriage is an adventure. Throwing a disability into the mix adds extra complexity," said Betty Ann. "At the core of our difficulties following my rehab was my not understanding her needs," said Chad. "I failed to appreciate how different we were."

Experience teaches, and tonight at 7:30 p.m. in the Aspenwood Condos meeting room (on Fall Lane), the Colleys are happy to let you learn from theirs.

Cactus Jack Tonight

Enjoy an evening of music from a Denver favorite—The Cactus Jack Band.

Jeff "Bodene" Fuhr, a Vietnam-era Veteran, started the band in 1977. The four-member band has been a staple of the Denver music circuit ever since.

This evening, Winter Sports Clinic participants and guests will enjoy an evening of music, including classic to contemporary country and classic rock 'n roll. "We will be playing something for everybody," said Fuhr.

Cactus Jack has worked a number of famous entertainers including the legendary Kenny Rogers. The band also composed the soundtrack for a made-for-TV movie "Escape from Terror," that aired on the NBC network.

Fuhr said his band is honored to play for the Veterans. "We owe a debt of gratitude to everyone who served. It's a pleasure to serve them."



THE DAY IN PHOTOS

A pictorial review of all the things that went on yesterday!



What Did You **SAY?**

Every day this week, we'll go out and ask one question. Here are your responses.

QUESTION

If you were suddenly given a million dollars, what would you do with it?



Raymond Warren
Ventura County, Calif.
Marines

"I would first use it to buy a house and pay off bills."



Clarence Mattison
Baltimore, Md.
Army

"I would use some of it to take care of immediate needs, then I would give the rest of it to good charities."



Gwendolyn Clouser
Lucerne Valley, Calif.
Army

"I would buy a condo in this area for Veterans and kids to participate in clinics like this one."



Michael Petlansky
Bishop, Calif.
Army

"I would help the people who have the greatest need for the money."



Dan Cole
Cincinnati, Ohio
Air Force

"I would use it so that Veterans could come to this event every year."

On the **MENU**

Breakfast

Fresh sliced seasonal melons & fruits
Oatmeal with granola, raisins, almonds, bananas
Scrambled eggs
Croissants, muffins, biscuits
Biscuits and gravy
Ham and bacon
Breakfast potatoes
Coffee, tea and juices

Lunch

Garden salad with vinaigrette
Pastas with marinara or alfredo sauce
Garlic bread and white bread

Dinner

Caesar salad
Trout almandine with rice mushroom pilaf
Herb crusted pork loin with cider bourbon sauce
Sweet potato casserole
Broccoli, carrot, cauliflower medley
Rolls and butter
Cherry cobbler crisp
Caramelized apple pie
Fruit cups
Ice cream and brownies

The Prosthetics Post

Welcome to another edition of the daily "Prosthetics Post" column in the Ski•Gram! This is where you can get answers to your frequently asked questions regarding VA Prosthetics Service. Don't forget, prosthetics professionals are here this week to answer your questions. Make sure to visit the information booth at meal times. Our Web site is always available for more information:
www.prosthetics.va.gov

Question of the day

Dear Prosthetic Post,
I have a left lower leg amputation and wear a prosthetic limb. Am I eligible for clothing allowance?
Sincerely, High-Tech Amputee

Dear HTA: You may be. Veterans who have a service-connected disability that requires the use of a prosthetic that wears out or tears clothing are eligible for a clothing allowance. The allowance may also be paid if the Veteran has a service-connected skin condition which requires the use of a prescribed medication which causes irreparable damage to the Veteran's outer garments. (NOTE: Irreparable damage does not include stains that are removable through regular laundering or dry cleaning.)

We ♥ Dogs

Assistance dogs and their owners form a special bond and share a love like no other.

It seems you are unable to walk more than a few steps here in Snowmass Village without seeing a Veteran accompanied by an assistance dog. Loyal and trustworthy, they stand by their owners at the ready to help them with their particular disabilities. Dogs can be trained to aid with vision, mobility, seizure alerts and more, and their breeds widely vary. Let's take a look at some of the amazing pooches (and their owners) who are here this week.

Chris Gray, an Army Veteran from Portland, Ore., has an undiagnosed, progressive neurological disorder that slurs his speech, impairs his balance and gives him an unsteady gait. Walter Reed Army Hospital matched him with his black Labrador Retriever, Thomas, now seven years old. Steady as a rock, Thomas assists Gray with mobility but when his harness is removed, the dog gets the message that he has switched from work mode to play, and exhibits all the body language of a dog ready for fun. Tail-wagging, a joyful bounce in his step, Thomas moves from person to person, eager for the pat he is not allowed while on duty. Gray's four daughters are his constant playmates at home in Portland.

Lucy is a Chow mix who works with Irma Proffitt of San Bernadino, Calif., providing both stability as well as a calming presence for her as she deals with a traumatic brain injury as well as post-traumatic stress. Proffitt served 23 years in the Army, four of which were in Iraq, until the vehicle she was driving was t-boned by an Iraqi tractor trailer. Her disabilities cause her great anxiety and make it difficult for her to leave home. "Lucy and I are a team; without her, I'd be a hermit," Proffitt said. "Coming here this week is a major step for me, to be among strangers." She rescued Lucy from a local dog pound and they worked together with a trainer from Rim of the World Comfort Pets (www.comfortpets.org) to bring Lucy's skills up to snuff.

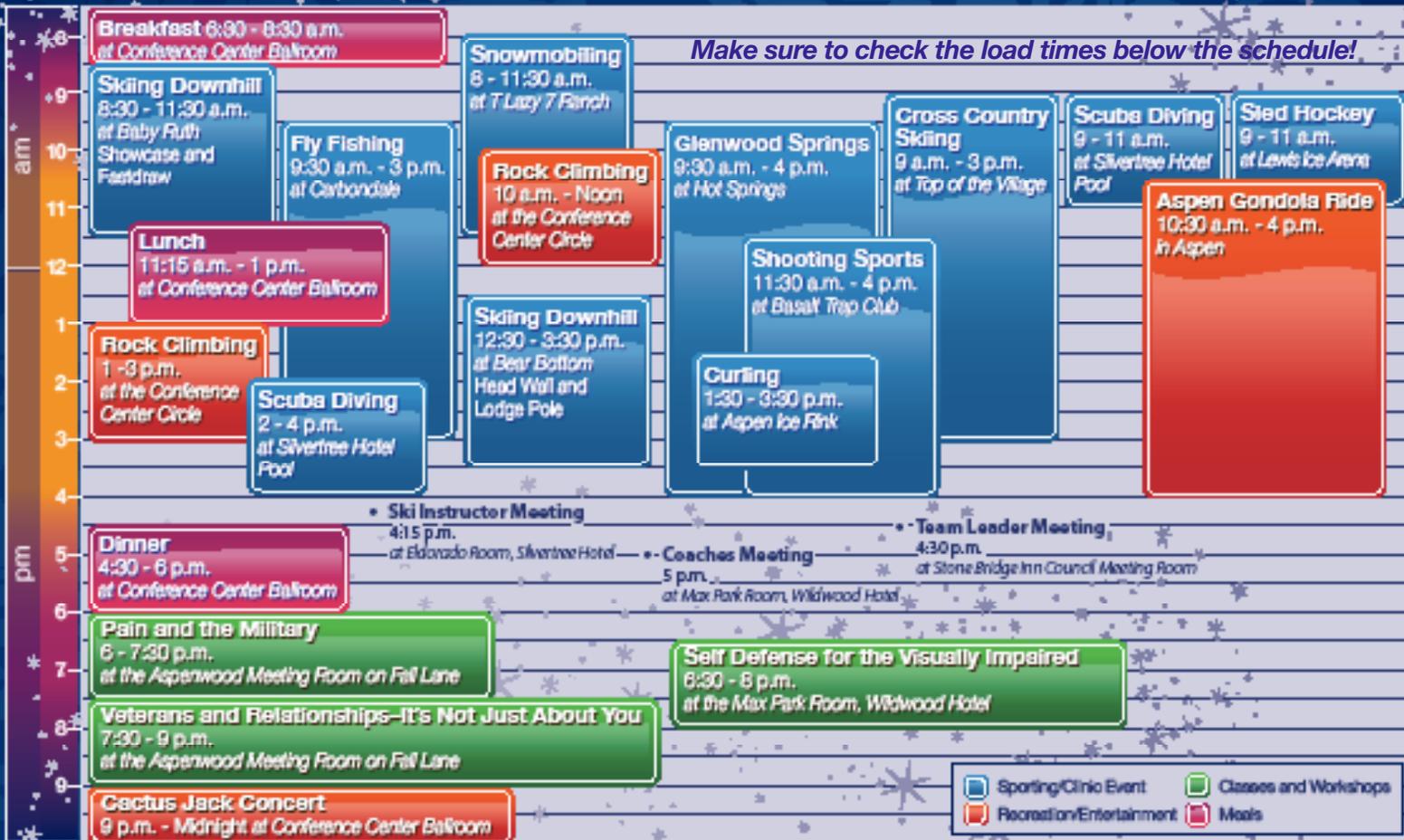


Jeffrey Hackett of Seattle, Wash. and his service dog Casanova.

Jeffrey Hackett of Seattle, Wash., served six years with the Navy and recently acquired his first service dog to assist him as his vision diminished due to retinitis pigmentosa. He had resisted getting a dog, relying on a cane, until he decided it would be easier to make the transition to a dog while he still had some eyesight. He teamed up with Casanova two years ago, a yellow Lab from Guide Dogs for the Blind, and has never regretted his decision. "The biggest change is how people approach you. When you use a cane, people are hesitant and don't know what to say. But Casanova really opens the door for socialization; you have to take a dog out for walks, after all." Hackett has found no down sides to working with a service dog. Casanova travels like a pro, clearly enjoys his work and provides constant companionship.

More and more organizations are training dogs specifically to serve Veterans, and with apparently great results. If you or someone you know is interested in the possibility of getting a service dog, an internet search will provide you with a number of organizations with information.

Schedule for Thursday April 1, 2010



The Bulletin

Massage

Complimentary massages for participants are available by scheduling an appointment. Massage is located in the Elbert room in the Silvertree Hotel. Please call (970) 589-2434 for an appointment from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Appointments taken until all slots are full.

Wheelchair and Prosthetics Repair

Located at the Host Room in the Conference Center. Repair hours are:
6:30 - 8:45 a.m.
11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
4 - 5:30 p.m.
In between these hours please call (970) 589-2154 for wheelchair assistance, and (970) 589-2519 for prosthetics needs. Please do not call after 6 p.m. unless it is an emergency.

Medical Room

For emergencies dial 911
Medical room phone: **(970) 923-8225**
The medical room is located in the Bedford A conference room, one level below the mall, across the street from 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 for 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.

Load Time Schedule

Event	Load
Snowmobiling	
First Trip	6:45 a.m.
Second Trip	9 a.m.
<i>Please make sure to load at your correct time.</i>	
Sled Hockey	7:45 a.m.
Fly Fishing	8:30 a.m.
Cross Country Skiing	
First Trip	8:20 a.m.
Second Trip	1 p.m.
<i>Buses will run up and down the mountain throughout the day. The 1 p.m. bus will also pick up any participants from the first trip who wish to return to the Conference Center. All remaining participants will be picked up at 3 p.m.</i>	
Hot Springs	9:30 a.m.
Trapshooting	10 a.m.
Aspen Gondola	10 a.m.
Curling	12:45 p.m.