



Midnight Sun

April 2006 Community Newsletter
www.wheelchairgames.org

Local Organizing Committee (LOC)
639 West International Airport Rd., Suite 26, Anchorage, AK 99518
Phone: (907) 276-5550 Fax: (907) 929-5707

Veteran and Country Star to Perform at Opening Ceremonies!

Games organizers are excited to welcome Luke Stricklin as one of the performers for the 26th National Veterans Wheelchair Games Opening Ceremonies. Stricklin started his country music career as a soldier in Iraq. While there, he wrote songs and sent them to his mother. One of those songs is, "Born American by the Grace of God." His mother sent the song to their hometown radio station where it became an instant hit. Now, it is popular on country radio stations nationwide.

The local organizing committee invites the children of athletes participating in the Games to sing the Star Spangled Banner with Stricklin at the Opening Ceremonies. Children must be between the ages of 8 and 18, and must be the child of an athlete registered to participate in the 2006 Games. The athlete's registration must be complete (with no missing information) in order for their child to be eligible to sing in the Opening Ceremonies. A total of 50 children will be accepted, with a maximum of one child per athlete.

To register your child, athletes can go to the local Games Web site www.wheelchairgamesanchorage.net and click on **SING WITH LUKE** to download the form.

The form must either be faxed to (907) 929-5707 or mailed to SING WITH LUKE/ADS, 639 West International Airport Rd., Suite 26, Anchorage, AK 99518. Applications will be accepted on a first come, first served basis (tip: faxing is faster than mailing). Forms received from athletes who have any missing information will not qualify. Athletes whose children are accepted will be notified by e-mail so please write the parents' e-mail address very clearly on the form. Each child who sings in the Opening Ceremonies will receive a T-shirt to wear during the performance, which will be theirs to keep as a memento. Please do not call to register your child. Registration can only be done by completing the form.

TIED TO ALASKA?

If you are participating in the 26th Games in Anchorage and have ties to Alaska (lived here, have relatives here or served here), please let us know! Contact the local public affairs co-chair, Marcia Hoffman-DeVoe, at (888) 353-7574, ext. 5490 or E-mail marcia.hoffman-devoe@med.va.gov.

chasing the Midnight Sun

Alaskan Athlete Profile

Tom Wilson – “Hosting the Wheelchair Games is a Privilege”

Neighbors might see Tom Wilson, 56, practicing for the Wheelchair Games from his front porch in Anchorage. “I practice about three to four hours a week for the field and air rifle events right in my own front yard,” said Wilson. “So far, none of my neighbors think it’s too strange!”

Wilson traded the sunny skies of California for the snow and ice of Alaska when his company offered him the opportunity to open a new store in Anchorage. “Alaska is so beautiful,” he said. “Who wouldn’t want to come up here?”

A U.S. Army combat veteran of Vietnam, Wilson is a paraplegic. At the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, he has competed in air guns, shot-put and bowling events. Winning five silver medals in his previous attempts in air guns and shot-put, Wilson finally reached his long-time goal of winning the gold medal in shot-put in 2003. “I’d been trying for so long and I was ready to be number one,” Wilson said. “I was extremely proud of myself.” Since that time, he has continued to win several additional medals in both the shot-put and air guns events.

To Wilson, competing in the Games helps him work through the frustrations of his disability, brought on by a stroke. “It’s hard going through life when you wake up one day and you can’t move a part of your body. One day I was doing stained glass and leather work, and the next day I couldn’t tie my shoes.” While he is still working on keeping an optimistic outlook, the Games help Wilson focus on the positive aspects of his life.

Athletics are nothing new for Tom Wilson. In high school, he was a sprinter on the track team. “I liked being part of the team then, and I feel the same way now being among the Alaska veterans. We root for each other and watch each other compete – we are an Alaska family.”

At past Wheelchair Games, veterans from more than 45 other states, plus Puerto Rico and Great Britain, have competed. Wilson believes the other athletes are always fascinated with Alaska because most have never visited “the last frontier.”

“There is so much to do in our state, such as fishing, skiing, whale watching and seeing the various glaciers and mountains,” Wilson said. “As host of the Games this year, we will showcase our state and give other veterans and volunteers the opportunity to experience part of America that was once foreign to them. That will be a privilege.”



UNVEILING ALASKA'S MYSTERIES

Glaciers: Alaska has the nation's greatest concentration of glaciers, covering almost 30,000 square miles. The Number 1 visitor attraction is just a short, spectacular drive away from Anchorage. Portage Glacier and the Begich, Boggs Visitor Center are located 50 miles south of Anchorage.

Mountains: You can see three active volcanoes from downtown Anchorage, Mt. Spurr, Mt. Redoubt and Mt. Augustine. The highest point on the continent of North America (Mount McKinley) is also visible, as are six major mountain ranges including the Tordrillo Mountains and the Aleutian Range.

**THE HOSPITALITY TEAM
WELCOMES YOU TO ANCHORAGE!**

The local hospitality team (along with many other local organizing committee members) are very excited you will be coming to Anchorage for the 2006 National Veterans Wheelchair Games, July 3-8. We know you will have a wonderful time while you are visiting our great State of Alaska.

There will be a group of volunteers to meet you at the airport when you arrive in Anchorage on Saturday, July 1 and Sunday, July 2. A table will be set up at the airport

so you can pick up a bottle of water and a snack before boarding a bus that will take you to your hotel. Team members will be available to answer any questions you may have upon your arrival into Anchorage.

Feel free to stop by the hospitality table during the Games and say hello, as everyone is anxious to meet you! There will be a variety of flyers and brochures about things to do around Anchorage and other areas of Alaska, as well as Games event guides. Hours of the hospitality table during the week will be 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day.

Dr. Dan's Corner:

TIPS FOR LONG-DISTANCE TRAVEL

The flight to Anchorage from the west coast is approximately 3-5 hours long. It will be double that time for flights from the midwest, and triple for anything east of the Mississippi. Here are some tips for the long flight.

REST: Begin your trip well-rested. Also, set aside time to rest once you arrive in Anchorage and before your activities begin.

IN-FLIGHT EXERCISES: Prevent stiffness with simple range-of-motion exercises such as ankle circles, shoulder circles, wrist and hand exercises, and leg lifts.

HYDRATION: Drink water and avoid alcoholic drinks.

FOOD: Eat lightly before and during travel. Bring snacks, as many airlines no longer provide in-flight meals.

MEDICINES: Complete any necessary medication injections before you leave.
Always carry medications in your carry-on bag or purse, as luggage may get lost or over-heated.

HELP: Ask for and accept help and special services when needed.

MOTION SICKNESS: If you get motion sickness, take a motion sickness drug before you fly; there is no cure for motion sickness once you are queasy.

FACE MASK: If your immune system is compromised in any way, wear a surgical mask or scarf over your nose and mouth to avoid germs in the recirculated air.

PILLOW: If you have neck pain, support your neck in an upright position with a soft cervical collar or horseshoe pillow. This will protect your head from bobbing if you fall asleep.

STAY WARM: If you are prone to getting cold, bring a jacket or request a blanket upon boarding.

NOISE: Bring a portable listening device, such as an MP3 or portable CD player, with headphones. Earplugs also help drown out the noise -- and your neighbor, if necessary!

JETLAG: It is easier on your body to travel west than east. It takes one day for every one hour of time difference for your body to adjust. Plan to get extra sleep the night you arrive so you can be in peak condition for the Games.

Dr. Dan

Now That You're in Top Shape, How About Your Wheelchair?

Be sure your wheelchairs (everyday and sports chairs) are in good working condition when you come to the Games in Anchorage. *Invacare* is once again a sponsor this year, but due to the remote location and the added cost of shipping spare parts to Alaska, available parts will be hard to come by. Repairs will be

done on an emergency basis, and all repairs will be at the discretion of the *Invacare* representatives on site.

The National Veterans Wheelchair Games require that your equipment be inspected prior to registration. A lot of time will have passed since then, so if you feel your equipment needs to be checked again before you depart for Anchorage, be sure to visit your local VA prosthetics center or your local repair shop for a once-over!

ALASKA JARGON:

"CHEECHAKO": A newcomer to the North.

"OUTSIDE": The term Alaskans use when referring to areas not within the boundaries of the state.

"LOWER 48": Alaska's term for all of those "contiguous" states.

Schedule of Events*

Dates, times and locations could change. Please visit www.wheelchairgames.org for the most up-to-date information.

MONDAY, JULY 3

9 a.m. — 4 p.m. Registration & Expo
11:30 a.m. Games Kick-Off
6:30 p.m. Opening Ceremonies
8 p.m. Welcome Reception

TUESDAY, JULY 4

10 a.m. Fourth of July Parade
Handcycling
3 p.m. All other sporting events begin!

WEDNESDAY, JULY 5

8 a.m. — 10 p.m. Sports Events

THURSDAY, JULY 6

Kids Day at the Games
9 a.m. — 10 p.m. Sports Events
11 a.m. Kids Day at Anchorage Stadium
5:30 p.m. Block Party

FRIDAY, JULY 7

9 a.m. — 10 p.m. Sports Events

SATURDAY, JULY 8

9 a.m. — 5 p.m. Sports Events
7:30 p.m. Closing Ceremonies and Banquet

REGISTRATION

The athlete application packet, as well as additional travel information, can be found on-line at www.pva.org/sports/games/gameindex.htm

The registration committee would like to encourage you to get your application in as early as possible so they can verify all pertinent information. Registration closes April 15, 2006.

Presenters of the 26th NVWG

Department of Veterans Affairs
Paralyzed Veterans of America

Hosts of the 26th NVWG

Alaska VA Healthcare System
Northwest Chapter, PVA

VOLUNTEERING:

Opportunities are available for friends and family to volunteer while enjoying the Games. The volunteer application can be found at www.wheelchairgamesanchorage.net.

Applications can either be downloaded and mailed or faxed, or completed and submitted on-line.

chasing the midnight sun