



Athlete Profile (Alaska)

Michael Mueller – Family Joins in Support of the Games

Michael Mueller knows all about support. The 56-year-old former Army infantry soldier from Anchorage has probably the most supportive family in Alaska. Wife Marti and the couple's children and grandchildren are all spending their days supporting Mueller in his quest to participate in the National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Anchorage this July.

Mueller, who served his country in Vietnam from 1969-1971, is signed up to compete in the field events (shot-put, field and discus) and air guns at the upcoming Games. As a novice athlete, he is competing in the event for the first time. "This is the first time I've competed in any athletic games since my abilities changed," he says. "These events encourage patriotism, camaraderie and therapeutic rehabilitation among fellow veterans."

He owes his participation, he says, to one of his own fellow veterans at the VA clinic in Anchorage, who told him all about the Games and urged him to join the local team. Mueller says "I didn't even know anything about the Wheelchair Games or that there was a local team. I decided that it could be a good thing to do, and I love it!"

Although Muller is a combat-wounded veteran of Vietnam, that injury did not result in his current need for a wheelchair. He was paralyzed from a spinal cord tumor and was only recently released from the VA Puget Sound Healthcare System in Seattle, after delicate surgery and only a tentative prognosis for recovery. Now, he feels so strongly about veterans supporting each other that he and his immediate family are committed to making their presence known throughout the duration of the Games. "It is so very important to let our guys and gals coming home know that we are there for them," he maintains. "My wife and I will be the ones to tell the rest of Anchorage to come out and watch."