

the Wave Writer

Thursday, October 2, 2008

Our Caregivers

ARE ONE GROUP OF INDIVIDUALS WHO DESERVE SPECIAL RECOGNITION.

There is one group of individuals here who deserve some special recognition. In addition to the amazing accomplishments of our veteran participants and the long hours of the coaches, team leaders, VA employees and volunteers, the contributions of the caregivers who are here in San Diego must not go unnoticed. So here's to the wives and husbands, the children and parents, the friends and extended family members, who are making sure this week's participants are having fun and are ready to take part in all events and activities. It is because of these important people that our veterans arrive at their venues on time, are looking good and dressed to compete, are well fed and hydrated, ready to greet the rest of us with a smile, and with their spirits just as strong as their bodies.

Cindy LeGrand, mother of Jeremy LeGrand from Earlville, Ill., learned about the Summer Sports Clinic from

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Tami Ammons (left) is here to support her fiance, Jeffrey Hackett (right).

WEATHER

TODAY



High 76°

Partly Sunny

Low 63°

TOMORROW



High 69°

Mostly Sunny

Low 62°

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Presented by the Department of Veterans Affairs

Jeremy's recreation therapist at the Hines VA Medical Center in Chicago. She is grateful they came. "I never saw him (Jeremy) do anything like this," Cindy said. "This is a wonderful experience, both for the veterans and also for us – it's the opportunity of a lifetime." Cindy works during the day while her husband helps Jeremy with various activities around the house. Jeremy suffers from a traumatic brain injury from a motor vehicle accident. Cindy takes over in the evenings after work. "This is a good break from the routine, and it's brought us even closer," she said. "Before yesterday, Jeremy had never gone kayaking. Heck, I'm over 50 and I'd never gone kayaking before!" Mother and son are both loving their experience this week. A veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Jeremy was injured three years ago, only six months after returning home from the battlefields of Iraq.

Keallie and Jacob Lietz, a veteran of the Army National Guard, live in Great Falls, Montana. They learned about the Clinic from a recreation therapist at the VA Puget Sound Health Care System in Seattle. Jacob also served in Iraq but was injured in a vehicle accident only seven months ago. A quadriplegic, Jacob and Keallie are still adjusting to life in a wheelchair. "I am speechless about this event," Keallie said. "This is so incredible, and just a great opportunity for anyone in a wheelchair. Trying these events makes Jacob stronger, and I like that I am able to do some of the activities with him, like kayaking and cycling." Keallie's mom and other members of her family are also here supporting the couple. "He won five medals at the National Veterans Wheelchair Games in July, but this is the first time I've been able to come with him," Keallie said. "I'm so glad we could do this."

Jeffrey Hackett, a Navy veteran from Federal Way, Washington, is here with his fiancée, Tami Ammons. Visually impaired, Hackett learned about the event from a blind rehabilitation therapist at the VA Puget Sound Healthcare System. "This is great fun," Ammons said. "It is so nice seeing Jeffrey doing the things he did before he lost his sight, seven years ago. It is good for him to be active. We had looked into tandem cycling before we got here, and I'm excited about finding things we can do together, like cycling." The couple, who went to middle and high school together, met up again more recently on Classmates.com. They plan to marry on November 1, which, according to Hackett, "is in 31 days to be exact," (not that he's counting).

Simona and Brian Isenhour from Sterling, Va., have been married seven years. An Air Force veteran, Brian was injured in 2004 and Simona is his primary caregiver. She also holds a full-time job as a dental clinic manager in the Washington, D.C. area. "I am happy to see him integrate and socialize with other people here," she said. "I can tell that his confidence has been positively influenced by the people around him. When he is comfortable, you can see his confidence increase and his personality shine. As his wife, it is one of the most wonderful and fulfilling experiences that I have."

These are just a few of the very special people who are here this week with our first time Clinic participants. Thank you all for taking care of our nation's heroes. Simona Isenhour may be speaking for the group when she says, "It is our goal to see to it that [these veterans] have a good life, because they deserve it. Being here this week at the Clinic has helped us get that much closer to the goal. It's hard to even put into words the gratitude that we feel." 🌱

Experience the Other Special Events

Now that you've experienced the National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic you may want to check out VA's other national rehabilitation special events. Why does VA believe in these special programs? Because physical activity, friendly competition and recreation therapy engage the mind as well as the body, and can contribute significantly to an improved quality of life. To this end, VA's national rehabilitation special events provide veterans with challenging opportunities to accomplish feats many may have believed were not available to them because of their disabilities or their age. These sports, recreation and artistic activities provide veterans with unique opportunities for self-development, camaraderie and a well-earned sense of accomplishment. For more information, check out: www1.va.gov/OPA/speceven/index.asp. In the meantime, here is information about each of them.

The National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic is the world leader in promoting rehabilitation by instructing veterans with disabilities in adaptive Alpine and Nordic skiing, and introducing them to a number of other adaptive recreational activities and sports.

The National Veterans Golden Age Games is the premier senior adaptive rehabilitation program for veterans in the world, and the only national multi-event sports and recreational seniors' competition program designed to improve the quality of life for all older veterans, including those with a wide range of abilities and disabilities.

The National Veterans Wheelchair Games is a sports and rehabilitation program for veterans who use wheelchairs for sports competition due to spinal cord injuries, amputations, or certain other neurological problems. It is the largest annual wheelchair sports event in the world.

Snapped!



Schedule of Today's Events

Thursday, October 2

am	Breakfast Marriott Hotel Restaurants • 6:30 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.				
8					
9	Team Nautilus Surfing La Jolla Shores 8:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.	Team Titan Kayaking Mission Bay Yacht Club 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.	Team Poseidon Track & Field Chula Vista Olympic Training Center 8:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.	Team Olympus Cycling Embarcadero 9:30 - 11:30 a.m.	Team Neptune Sailing San Diego Harbor 9 - 11:30 a.m.
10					
11					
12	Lunch Served at all venues • Noon - 1 p.m.				
1					
2				Team Olympus Sailing San Diego Harbor 1 - 4 p.m.	
3				Team Neptune Cycling Embarcadero • 1:30 - 3 p.m.	
4	The 4:30 sessions presented below are mandatory for all participants.				
5	Team Nautilus Community Integration New York Rm. • 4:30 p.m.	Team Titan Nutrition Chicago Rm. • 4:30 p.m.	Team Poseidon Nutrition Chicago Rm. • 4:30 p.m.	Team Olympus Stress Management Orlando Rm. • 4:30 p.m.	Team Neptune Coping San Francisco Rm. • 4:30 p.m.
6					
7	Dinner Marriott Hotel Restaurants • 6 p.m.				
8					
9					
pm					



Thursday's Bus Schedule

Morning Sessions

Surfing, Team Nautilus:

Load at 7 a.m., depart hotel at 7:30 a.m.

Kayaking, Team Titan:

Load at 8 a.m., depart hotel at 8:30 a.m.

Track & Field, Team Poseidon:

Load at 7 a.m., depart hotel at 7:30 a.m.

Sailing, Team Neptune:

Load sailboat at 9 a.m.

Cycling, Team Olympus:

Load at 9 a.m., depart hotel at 9:30 a.m.

Afternoon Sessions

Surfing, Team Nautilus:

Load at 3 p.m., depart venue at 3:30 p.m.

Kayaking, Team Titan:

Load at 3 p.m., depart venue at 3:30 p.m.

Track & Field, Team Poseidon:

Load at 3 p.m., depart venue at 3:30 p.m.

Sailing, Team Olympus:

Load sailboat at 1p.m., depart venue at 3:30 p.m.

Cycling, Team Neptune:

Load at 1 p.m., depart hotel at 1:30 p.m.

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Prosthetics and Wheelchair Repair

Wheelchair technicians will be at the Track & Field and Cycling venues from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. through Friday.

The Wheelchair Technician can be contacted at **(619) 886-4940**. The "on call" Prosthetist is at **(619) 886-4187**.

Medical Information

For life threatening emergencies call 911.

The medical room is located at **Marriott Hotel, Room 2000, 20th Floor in the North Tower**. A nurse or doctor is on duty from **7:30 a.m. - 8 p.m. daily**. If the nurse is not in the room, please call **(619) 886-4058**.

The Other Special Events

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The National Veterans Creative Arts Festival is the celebration and grand finale stage and art show which are the culmination of talent competitions for veterans in art, creative writing, dance, drama and music.

The National Veterans TEE Tournament provides veterans with an opportunity to participate in therapeutic adaptive golf activities, which demonstrate that having a visual or physical disability need not be an obstacle to an active, rewarding life. 🔄

National Veterans Creative Arts Festival

www.creativeartsfestival.va.gov

National Veterans Disabled Winter Sports Clinic

www.wintersportsclinic.va.gov

National Veterans Golden Age Games

www.veteransgoldenagegames.va.gov

National Veterans Wheelchair Games

www.wheelchairgames.va.gov