

National Veterans Wheelchair Games



Athlete Profile (Local)

Sean Halstead – Leading by Example

Early on, Sean Halstead, 38, decided to follow in the path of his father and three brothers, and enlisted in the Air Force. In 1998, however, Halstead's military career took a sudden and unexpected turn. He was taking part in a combat search and rescue exercise when he fell off a rope, tumbling rapidly 40 feet to the ground below. The fall burst his L1 vertebrae, leaving Halstead a paraplegic.

While recuperating at the VA medical facility in Seattle, Halstead was introduced to the National Veterans Wheelchair Games by his recreation therapist. "It was not an option," he laughs. "I didn't question it – and it was the best thing they could have done for me." He now explains to others just what being active can do for a person and he does it with an overwhelming enthusiasm. "Getting out and being active is better than any drug out there, and it's the best thing you can do," he said.

Having a father in the service meant moving around a bit growing up. Halstead started out in Spokane, Washington and then moved on to California, Germany and Alabama, eventually returning to Spokane to graduate from high school. Now, with his wife and twin children, Halstead resides in Rathdrum, Idaho, a short 32 miles from the Spokane VA Medical Center where he receives care. The facility is co-hosting the National Veterans Wheelchair Games in July 2009, along with the Northwest Chapter of Paralyzed Veterans of America.

Having their children grow up close to their grandparents was only one reason that Halstead and his wife decided to settle in Rathdrum – the other was snow. An avid skier, Halstead is training to for a spot on the U.S. Paralympic Ski Team and hopes to have a spot secured when the Winter Paralympic Games take place in Vancouver, Canada in 2010.

Halstead views the National Veterans Wheelchair Games as not just a sporting event, but an opportunity to introduce others to an active lifestyle. When the 2008 National Veterans Wheelchair Games were broadcast on-line by an interactive media network for the disabled community, Halstead couldn't have been more excited. "It was awesome that they broadcast the Games because it showed others what's going on," he said. "The videos show guys playing basketball and others playing softball, and there's two quadriplegics running into each other during quad rugby. It's stuff you just have to see."

Halstead's strong feeling for the Games is unmistakable. He doesn't have a good way to explain the excitement of the Games verbally, so he uses another method to get the message across. "Hopefully, I can be an example for others to do it," he said. "I haven't found the magic solution to get someone to go, but I hope I can be the example they need."

