



Midnight Sun



A Publication of the 26th National Veterans Wheelchair Games

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Local Organizing Committee (LOC)

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UNVEILING ALASKA'S MYSTERIES

Native Culture: Alaska Natives represent approximately 16 percent of Alaska's residents and are a significant segment of the population in more than 200 rural villages and communities. Many Alaska Natives have retained their customs, language, hunting and fishing practices and ways of living since what they term "the creation times." Alaska's Native people are divided into eleven distinct cultures, speaking twenty different languages. They are Athabascan, Yup'ik, Cup'ik, Inupiaq, St. Lawrence Island Yupik, Aleut, Alutiiq, Eyak, Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian. For more information on Alaska's Natives and their cultures, we recommend you visit the Alaska Native Heritage Center in Anchorage. Call (907) 330-8000 for hours.

State Parks: Alaska has 119 state parks spread across southeast, south central, interior and western Alaska. Some of the parkland is undeveloped, but many of the parks have campgrounds, fishing and picnic tables. The parks are accessible by road, except for marine parks which require visitors to use boats or airplanes. The biggest park is Wood-Tikchik State Park, which covers 1.55 million acres of western Alaska. The Chugach State Park, which is the second largest park and covers 495,204 acres, is just east of Anchorage.

The Bear Facts: There are three main types of bears in Alaska: black, brown and polar. Black bears normally weigh less than 300 pounds and love to climb trees. Brown bears come in many different sizes and can weigh up to 1,000 pounds. One kind of brown bear, the grizzly, is found only in North America. Polar bears are the best hunters of all bears and live in the arctic region to the north.

When it comes to bears, there are six basic safety rules:

- Keep away from a bear's food cache.
- Never feed bears.
- Don't camp on a bear trail.
- Keep a clean camp.
- Never get too close to a bear.
- Never surprise a bear.



If you run into a bear, identify yourself by talking in a normal tone and waving your arms in the air slowly. A standing bear is curious, not threatening. You may try to back away slowly diagonally; do not turn and run. If attacked by a brown bear, lie face down and clasp your hand behind your neck.

For more Alaska facts, visit www.anchorage.net

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.

Alaskan Athlete Profile **Vern Bussing: An Inspiration to All**

Vern Bussing, a 63-year-old Navy veteran from Anchorage, Alaska, served as an aviation electrician from 1959-1963. On February 13, 1999, the day before his wedding anniversary, Bussing's life changed forever when he flipped over in his snow machine. Although Bussing instantly became a quadriplegic as a result of the accident, his enthusiasm for life remains unchanged.

Now working as Safety Advisor for Anchorage Chrysler, Bussing also attends the University of Alaska Anchorage, studying architectural technology. He stays involved with his community through membership in a number of veterans and civic organizations including the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Moose Lodge and the Loyal Order of the Eagles.

"It doesn't take anything to go out there and try," said Bussing, of competing in wheelchair sports. "It doesn't matter if you win or lose; the friends you make at the Games will be there for life." It is with this positive attitude that Bussing fondly remembers the first time he dared to compete, and went to Fresno, California, for the 2004 National Veterans Golden Age Games, where he bowled competitively as a quadriplegic for the first time.

According to Bussing, veterans should participate in these types of events in order to get out and challenge themselves. A big part of competition is

meeting other people in the same condition. Bussing, like many veterans, says that the camaraderie at the events is unbelievable.



This year will be Bussing's first time competing in the National Veterans Wheelchair Games. He has chosen to compete in five sports, which include the motorized wheelchair rally, air guns, slalom, bowling and the power chair relay.

Anchorage is a great place to hold the Games, according to Bussing. "The entire outdoors is at your doorstep." He encourages spectators to come to the Games because "they'll see things they will not believe." The 2006 event will take place during Independence Day and local organizers are including the veterans in the local parade. Bussing says, "This year, the Fourth of July in Anchorage will be like Anchorage has never seen before."

Vern Bussing credits the local VA healthcare center in Anchorage, a host of this year's Wheelchair Games, for the positive position he is in today. "The VA has been tremendous," he says. An inspiration to others facing life's challenges, Bussing puts it this way, "If you put your mind to it, you can do most everything."

POLLER ROLLER PICNIC:

The Alaska Disabled Veterans Sports Program, Inc. invites attendees of the Games who are in town early to join them at their "Poller Roller" picnic on Saturday, July 1, beginning at noon. The picnic will be on the banks of Anchorage's downtown salmon stream, Ship Creek, located at 920

Whitney Avenue. The menu will include hamburgers and hot dogs, side fixings, plus all the legal fresh Alaskan salmon we can catch. Please feel free to bring your favorite side dish.

For information, contact Eva Aulston, by e-mail at Baltimore1935@aol.com or by phone at (907) 333-6661.

ALASKA JARGON:

Ulu: Native fish knife with half-round blade

Eskimo Ice Cream: Crisco shortening with local berries

Dog Salmon: Any salmon except the King, such as Silvers, that would sell elsewhere for many dollars per pound, but in Alaska are only considered suitable to be dried for dog food.

MAJESTIC PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND: ALASKA'S BEST KEPT SECRET

Prince William Sound Glacier Cruises

Daily Trip Dates: Sunday, July 2 – Friday, July 7

Trip operates daily from the Egan Convention Center. It departs at 10 a.m. and returns at 7:30 p.m. This is perfect for athletes not competing, family and friends. Wheelchair accessible. Cost per person is \$209.

Limited space available to be sold on a first come, first served basis. To sign up for this tour, visit <http://www.pva.org/sports/games/gameindex.htm> Click on the blue box that says, "Registration 26th" and cursor down to "ALASKAN TOURS: Tour Registration Form."

This once-in-a-lifetime trip begins with a 1 1/2 hour scenic transfer south along the Turnagain Arm of Cook Inlet to Portage, and will tunnel through the Chugach Mountain Range emerging in the port town of Whittier. Board one of two tour boats for a five-hour narrated sightseeing cruise tour through majestic Prince William Sound, Alaska's best kept secret. You'll have the opportunity to view majestic glaciers, adorable sea otters, sea lions, fur seals, soaring bald eagles, breaching whales and more. Lunch is included on the boat tour. Return to Port of Whittier and bus back to Anchorage. The trip is offered on two separate boats so please book your entire party together if they want to travel together.

PACKING FOR ALASKA

When most people think of Alaska, they think of ice and snow. We bet a 90-degree July day in Fairbanks will dispel that notion. Within the state's 586,000 square miles, a wide range of climates occurs. The weather is also highly changeable in the summer, going from cloudy and cool, to sunny and hot within a few hours. Our recommendation is to wear layers and be prepared for anything.

Appropriate attire in Alaska is best described as comfortable and casual. Dress as you would for the climate in the Pacific Northwest or the New England states. Always be prepared for rain. It makes the most sense to dress in layers so you can take them off or put them on as the weather changes.

A typical day's attire might start out with warm socks, tennis shoes, jeans, an undershirt (or turtleneck if it's really cold), a sweater, and a waterproof or windproof jacket. If the day warms up, you can take off the jacket and the sweater. You could luck out and have real summer weather, so don't forget to bring

short-sleeved shirts. A long-sleeved, lightweight shirt is best for those warm summer evenings when mosquitoes are out in full force. Pants are acceptable for women everywhere, and even in the best Anchorage restaurants you will find people dressed in jeans.

Comfortable shoes or tennis shoes are a must. Bring extra socks and a hat or visor, not only for warmth but to shield your eyes from the Midnight Sun. A lightweight, zip-front waterproof jacket with a hood will prove indispensable and easily gotten into and out of as the weather changes. If you are going to spend any time on the water before or after the Games, you will need a rain hat, rain jacket or parka with a hood, and rain pants.

If you plan to spend any time outside, be sure to bring (or purchase upon your arrival) some mosquito repellent. Also, don't forget to bring sunscreen.

LUGGAGE TAGS: Because athletes will be staying at various hotels around Anchorage, be sure to use the luggage tags mailed to you in the confirmation packet prior to the Games.

Veteran and Country Star to Perform at Opening Ceremonies!

A reminder that the local organizing committee in Anchorage has invited the children of athletes participating in the Games to sing the Star Spangled Banner with country music star Luke 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. All athletes' registration materials must be complete (with no missing information) in order to be eligible. 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 registration 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 requires completing the form.

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

11 a.m. Fourth of July Parade
2:30 p.m. Handcycling
3 p.m. All other sports 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
10:30 a.m. Kids Day at Bartlett High School
5:30 p.m. Block Party

FRIDAY, JULY 7

9 a.m. — 10 p.m. Sports Events

SATURDAY, JULY 8

8 a.m. — 5 p.m. Sports Events
7 p.m. Closing Ceremonies and Banquet

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.

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