

# National Veterans Wheelchair Games



## Athlete Profile (National)

### Dana Liesegang—An Example for All

Dana Liesegang, a 34-year-old Navy veteran from Grand Junction, Colorado keeps busy year-round, rafting in the summer and skiing in the winter. Being a quadriplegic doesn't stop Liesegang from keeping active. For the past 15 years, she has been training in a variety of wheelchair sports. In July 2006, her hard work will pay off once again when she competes in softball, slalom and table tennis at the National Veterans Wheelchair Games.



Liesegang's first time competing in wheelchair sports was only nine months after she was injured. She says, "This has shown me that there is life after injury and it gives me a family of people that I get to see once a year. The camaraderie, the spirit, the positive energy – it's all uplifting. I get to be 'normal' for a week. You're the norm, with five other hundred other people also there in wheelchairs. It's comforting."

According to Liesegang, family and friends should attend the Games because it shows them what these athletes can achieve. "It is very uplifting to come and watch and see that life really isn't that bad," she says. "It takes ordinary problems and makes them seem pretty small. If they see all the people in wheelchairs who are happy with their lives, they realize that life is good."

When asked about the Games being in Anchorage, Liesegang responds, "it's totally exciting! This year, we're probably more excited about being in Alaska than anything else."

In the end, though, the most important thing for Liesegang is the camaraderie. "It's not as much about the competition as just being out there and enjoying life with friends." Don't get her wrong – Liesegang has still managed to rack up an impressive collection of gold, silver and bronze medals in her years of competition, and finds that the whole experience of wheelchair sports competition contributes to the overall quality of her life in an important way. "These events have been an asset to my life that I cannot live without," she says. "If I had to choose between going back in time and never having an injury, or attending the events and meeting the people who are now my adopted family, I would choose the Games and the people. It's that important to me."