

National Veterans Wheelchair Games



Athlete Profile (Alaska)

Kenneth Schoenlein – Staying Active is Important!

Imagine ascending a mountain in Willow for a view of the Matanuska-Susitna Valley on one side and the Alaska Range on the other, then watching Ken Schoenlein maneuver his hand controlled Polaris Ranger six-wheeler with his wheelchair strapped on the back, heading up the mountain. Staying active is important to Schoenlein, an Army veteran from Willow, Alaska. He regularly enjoys the Alaskan outdoors by camping, fishing and hunting.

Schoenlein served in the Army from 1976-79 at Ft. Hood, Texas and also in Germany, where he worked in helicopter repair and served as an aviation crew chief. His injury occurred only two months after he was discharged from service, the result of a motorcycle accident. It was during rehabilitation at the St. Louis VA Medical Center that Schoenlein first tried wheelchair sports. “As soon as I was able to wheel myself to the gym, I starting shooting hoops,” he says. Following his rehabilitation, he stayed active in wheelchair basketball while attending Delta College in Michigan, where he received an Associates degree in computer operations. He also enjoyed swimming, table tennis and weightlifting.

In 1998, Schoenlein moved to Alaska. He and his brother now operate a small business named “Alaska Rustic Woodworks,” which specializes in the art of rustic furniture, carvings and accessories. In addition to competitive sports, Schoenlein also enjoys tying flies for trout and salmon fishing.

Like many wheelchair athletes, including those from the area and those traveling across the country, Ken Schoenlein is excited to have the National Veterans Wheelchair Games come to Alaska. “It’s the main reason I’m participating,” he says. While at the Games, he will compete in handcycling, air guns and archery. He looks forward to having fellow veterans see what Alaska really is, and “not all ice and snow!” He also encourages Alaskans to come out to see the Games. “It will be an eye-opener,” he says. “Everyone should see what individuals in wheelchair sports are doing and should watch these veteran athletes being active in sports.” Schoenlein finds wheelchair sports to be therapeutic, saying that competition and determination help him set goals and stay healthy, both physically and mentally.

