



Midnight Sun

A Daily Publication of the 26th National Veterans Wheelchair Games



Issue 2

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'Seasoned' Athletes Add Spice to Games!



Eugene Gold, of Waialua, Hawaii, has attended 19 National Veterans Wheelchair Games.

What greater testimony to the benefits of the National Veterans Wheelchair Games than the competitors who come back year after year to relive the experience. Some of our 2006 athletes have attended 15, 20 and even more times. Two veterans, Jimmy May of Midlothian, Va., and Leon Thompkins, of Englewood, Fla., have attended 26 times—every single year since the event began.

Others haven't come back quite that often, but they all share the commitment. Joseph Sapienza of

Puyallup, Wash., has attended 25 times, missing only the first year. "The Wheelchair Games keep me going from year to year," he said. "We are competing against some national, world class and Paralympic champions. You can't get better than that!" While Sapienza hopes to bring home more medals for his collection (he won two gold last year) he also has another goal. "I hope to help as many of the younger guys as I can and do anything I can to get them 'wired up' about the Games," he said.

Trekking to Anchorage is long-distance travel for most of us, and Eugene Gold knows all about that. Living in Waialua, Hawaii, every year is a long-distance trip. It hasn't seemed to deter him from coming, though, since he's returned 19 times now. "The Games are a very big event for me," Gold said. "The competition makes you do your best in everyday life, and staying healthy is very important. I've competed in this and other competitions for 24 years and I always look forward to seeing old friends and making new ones. Archery is my favorite sport, and shooting from a wheelchair is my great achievement." Known as "The Golden Arrow," Gold won a gold medal in that event for 17 years in a row.

Penny Gillett made her mark in 1995 when she was selected a co-winner of the prestigious Spirit of the Games Award. Like many participants, she's used the skills she learned at the Games to progress in sports. "This is my 20th year competing in the National Veterans Wheelchair Games," Gillett said. "I was introduced to air guns at the 1995 Games and have continued with professional shooting on a national level. This event is an absolute blessing; I get

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Today's Weather

Partly cloudy; high 72 degrees, low 56 degrees; 10 percent chance of rain.



Schedule of Events for Today

7:30-9 a.m.	Breakfast	Hotels
8-9 a.m.	Late Registration	Egan Convention Center
11 a.m.	Fourth of July Parade	9th and L Street Downtown
1 p.m.	Lunch	Egan Convention Center
2:30 p.m.	Handcycling	Downtown Anchorage
3 p.m.	Air Guns	Egan Convention Center
	Slalom	Bartlett High School
	Motorized (head/mouth)	Egan Convention Center
	Table Tennis	IA, IB, IC
	Basketball	Games 1, 2
	Dinner	Sullivan Arena
5:30-7:30 p.m.	Air Guns	Egan Convention Center
7:30 p.m.	Basketball	Egan Convention Center
	Games 3, 4	Sullivan Arena
	Power Soccer	Games 1, 2
	Bowling	IA, IB, IC, Stick, Handleball
	Basketball	Games 5, 6
9 p.m.	Power Soccer	Games 3, 4
		Cellular One Sports Center

Awards Presentation Schedule

As always, medals are being awarded two ways. For sports events with a clear winner, medals will be awarded at the venue immediately after the event. These include: handcycling, slalom, table tennis, power soccer, quad rugby, weightlifting, basketball and softball. If you are unable to accept your immediate award after the event, they will be available at the next scheduled awards time at the Egan Center, or for pick-up prior to the Closing Ceremonies.

If results must be tabulated, medals are delayed. They will be presented at the Awards Table in the Egan Center during the following times.

- Air Guns & Bowling: July 6, 4:30–8 p.m.
- Track & Field: July 7, 4:30–8 p.m.
- Archery & Swimming: July 8, 11:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m.
- Motor Rally: July 8, 4–7 p.m. **at Sullivan Arena**

Award photos are being taken and printed right at the awards area (one per athlete). Results are being posted on bulletin boards in the Egan Center lobby. Please pick up your medals promptly to avoid a long line the last day.

Team Assignments

Team assignments for power soccer, quad rugby, basketball and softball were made at the close of registration. Handouts with team assignments and the brackets will be available by this morning. Printed lists will also be located at the meal location in the Egan Convention Center. If you are in a team sport, pick yours up right away so you will know your schedule for the week.

On the Menu ...



Breakfast (7:30-9 a.m. at hotels):

Menus vary by location.

Lunch (1 p.m. at Egan Convention Center):

Cream of tomato soup; chicken salad on croissant; Mediterranean pasta salad; banana; oatmeal raisin cookies; assorted beverages.

Dinner (5:30-7:30 p.m. at Egan Convention Center):

Mixed green salad; roasted pork loin; apple-almond stuffing; rice pilaf; sautéed zucchini/tomato blend; strawberry shortcake; assorted beverages.

**Note: Some menu items may be subject to change at the chef's discretion.*

**Happy 4th
of July!**

Cyclists Hit Streets of Anchorage Today

The handcycling competition kicks off the events today at the Games. Scheduled to begin in downtown Anchorage right after lunch and the parade, the race will commence promptly at 2:30 p.m.

David Nau, 56, an Army veteran from Perry, Ohio, and a handcycling gold medal winner at the 2005 Games, will once again compete for the gold. Known as a fierce competitor, Nau is looking forward to the competition. "I've never been to Alaska and being among fellow veterans to compete in this year's event is special. Attending the Games is like coming to a big family reunion—a reunion of old friends and fellow comrades. I always look forward to the competition."

Nau became interested in handcycling while competing for the first time at the 1999 Games in San Juan, Puerto Rico. "Back then, I trained seven days a week, traveling approximately twelve miles a day. Today, I still train three times a week, and cover about ten miles per session."

Handcycling began in the 1980s as a recreational sport and was held as an expedition event in San Juan. Today, 60 competitors will race to the finish line, making handcycling one of the most popular events at the Games and among wheelchair users nationwide.

An interesting twist to the event this year is the conclusion of the international Sadler's Ultra Challenge. This grueling 267-mile race is the longest wheelchair and handcycle race in the world. Athletes travel from around the globe to participate in this six-



Sixty competitors will race to the finish line today, making handcycling one of the most popular events at the Games. day test of athleticism and endurance. Competitors race from Fairbanks to Anchorage in the sun, wind and rain along the George Parks Highway. Ultra Challenge participants make their ceremonial finish in Anchorage at the end of the Games handcycling competition.

When Nau learned of Sadler's Ultra Challenge he said, "I look forward to meeting these athletes; obviously, we all have a lot in common—testing our abilities and competing."

Be sure to watch our cyclists as they make their way through Anchorage, and cheer them on as they pass by. They are meeting the ultimate objective to overcome life's challenges—the competition just helps make the journey worth the ride!

Telling *Your* Story: Hometown News at the Games

For many years at the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, the public affairs team has operated a "Hometown News" program to let your local newspapers know about your participation in the Games.

Through this effort, we prepare an individual news release for any veteran requesting one, which is placed on the Games Web site later in the week to make it available to your local media. For anyone who asked for a news release, we hope to have them posted on the Web site by Thursday or Friday (see www.wheelchairgames.org, on the "Athlete Information" page.)

Also, our photographers will be taking action photos this week of as many athletes as possible. If you requested a news release, our goal is have your best photo on the Web site by the time you leave. We also hope to provide you with one 4x6" print of that photo, along with a copy of your personal news release.

The Web site makes your information much more accessible to local media in your area. We will also be e-mailing and calling hundreds of media outlets all week to let them know that you are here and competing in the National Veterans Wheelchair Games. Unfortunately we can never guarantee that a story will run, but we do our best to make the information available to local media throughout the country.

Don't forget to check out the Games Web site when you get home so you can see your news release and photo, along with your event results. Also, please help us spread the word to the newspapers and other media back home about this great story—all about you!

If you didn't ask for a news release on your hometown news form but have changed your mind, you must complete the form and turn it in to our public affairs team in the Games media center. It is located in the Hilton Hotel, in the Bristol Bay Ballroom. You may call (907) 257-6769 for more information.

What's Where?

Durable Medical Equipment (DME) is located at the Marriott Hotel in the Skagway Room; the Sheraton Anchorage Hotel in the Kuskokwim Room; and the Howard Johnson Hotel in the Anchorage Room. Hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. through Friday, and from 12 a.m. Saturday to 12 a.m. Sunday. The phone number for DME is (907) 382-2934.

Hospitality

Hospitality desks are located in each hotel lobby and at the Egan Convention Center through Sunday, July 9. Hours are 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. A wealth of information is available at each of these desks, such as recommended restaurants and places to shop, things to do in Anchorage, maps with driving directions, the Games schedule, transportation schedule, departure information and extra luggage tags, lost luggage forms, Spirit of the Games Award ballots, and optional tour information.

Internet Cafe

You are far from home and just won a medal—how do you let your friends back home know? Come to the Internet Café and send them a message, of course! This year, the Internet Café will be located in the lobby of the Egan Convention Center. Café hours are 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Computers and printers are available, compliments of longtime Games sponsor Hewlett-Packard. Staff will also be available to help with questions. Also, be sure to tell your friends and family back home about the Games Web site. Results, news releases and photos will be posted starting mid-week, at www.wheelchairgames.org.

Medical Emergencies and Assistance

Full medical suites are available only at the following hotels: Marriott, Sheraton Anchorage, and Howard Johnson. These medical suites will be fully operational through July 8, ending at 10:30 p.m. The medical suites will be open for athletes each day from 7 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. for treatment of injuries and illnesses. If you have a medical emergency after the medical suites are closed, contact the operator at the hotel where you are staying. That operator will take the athlete's name and room number and communicate with the physician or nurse on call.

Do not call 911 unless there is a life-threatening emergency! If this occurs, please have the hotel operator contact 911.

All other hotels will have nurses on duty after hours only. It is the same procedure for contacting the hotel operator for medical emergencies after 10:30 p.m. If medical issues arise during the day, athletes need to go to the medical suites at the Marriott, Sheraton, or Howard Johnson, or be evaluated at the various venue sites where medical teams are also stationed. The medical staff will be easily identified by their red shirts with a white cross on the back.

Only registered athletes or volunteers on duty will be treated by VA medical staff in the hotels or at the venues. If family members need medical assistance, a list of local emergency clinics and hospitals will be available at the hospitality desks.

Wheelchair Repair

Wheelchair repair is available through Sunday, July 9 for emergencies only. The main wheelchair repair station is located at the Marriott Hotel. Invacare personnel are also available at most sports venues for emergency repairs. Contact the hospitality desk at your hotel for specific locations or for after-hours emergencies. The hospitality desks are open from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily.

Transportation

Hotel Transportation to Main Transport HUB

There are three main transportation loops from the hotels to the Egan Center, which is the main transportation hub. All hotel buses go to the Egan Center. **You must transfer at the Egan Center** to be transported to your event venue.

Red Loop – hotels located on the east side of downtown, which include:

- Sheraton Anchorage Hotel
- Clarion Suites Hotel
- Howard Johnson
- Aspen Hotel (must push to the Clarion to pick up transportation)

White Loop – hotels located on the west side of downtown:

- Hawthorne Suites Hotel
- Marriott Hotel

Blue Loop – hotels located in midtown:

- Hilton Garden Inn
- Homewood Suites
- Motel 6
- Fairfield Inn



To & From Sporting Venues

Transportation departs from the Egan Center starting **one hour** prior to game time. Please plan ahead when departing from your hotel to the Egan Center.

Please plan ahead ... Athletes need to be at their respective sports venues at least a half-hour before start time. It is **strongly recommended** that you depart from your hotel two hours prior to start time. If your sport is at the Egan Center (Weightlifting, Table Tennis or Air Guns) you only need to depart from your hotel one hour before.

Remember, when departing from your hotel you will be taken to the Egan Center where you will transfer to another bus that will take you to your event. For Opening and Closing Ceremonies you will be taken directly from your hotel to that venue site.

Egan Center distances from hotels:

Sheraton Anchorage Hotel – 7 blocks

Clarion Suites Hotel – 3 blocks

Howard Johnson – 2 blocks

Hawthorne Suites Hotel – 9 blocks

Marriott Hotel – 5 blocks

Aspen – 7 blocks (no transportation is available from this hotel. You must push to the Clarion (2 blocks) for transportation.

Hilton – 2 blocks (no transportation is available from this hotel. You must push to the Egan Center for transportation.

Hilton Garden Inn – 2 miles (not pushable)

Homewood Suites – 2 miles (not pushable)

Motel 6 – 2 miles (not pushable)

Fairfield Inn – 2 miles (not pushable)

'Seasoned' athletes cont.

to see the country and compete with (not against) my friends. I like the camaraderie here—it is a very important part of my life.”

Diagnosed with multiple sclerosis many years ago, she continues to take life’s challenges head on.

“Even when my health is not good, I feel I can go to the Games and feel safe, secure, accepted and pretty much normal.”

Gillette’s co-winner of the 1995 Spirit of the Games Award, James Torres, from Caguas, Puerto Rico, is another long-time competitor and a past Paralympic athlete. He has attended the Games 24 times over the years, and even when he reached the level of world-class competition, Torres still prepared for and looked forward to the National Veterans Wheelchair Games each time. He still does. “I

need to prepare myself for the competitors who want to beat me!” Torres said. “The Games offer a unique experience to all participants. We can show the world what can be accomplished when there is a will.”

Rory Cooper, of Gibsonia, Pa., another Paralympian, has come to the Games for 23 years. “The National Veterans Wheelchair Games have literally changed my life,” he said. “I was an athlete in high school and the Army, and was looking for an outlet for my competitive energy when I was injured. The Games provided that and much more, and I have formed friendships lasting more than 20 years. Today, the Games are also part of my professional life as we plan and conduct research studies to assist our veterans to live life to the fullest.” (Cooper, who is a

Ph.D. research scientist, is a recognized authority in the field of spinal cord health care, research and education.)

There are many other long-time athletes in Alaska this week, and our newcomers should make a point to meet them because they have so much to share.

Dana Liesegang of Grand Junction, Colo., perhaps says it best. While she’s “only” been competing for 15 years, she believes the entire experience adds greatly to the quality of her life. “It has shown me that there’s a life after injury and has given me a family of people that I get to see once a year. The camaraderie, the spirit, the positive energy—it’s all uplifting. At the Games, you are the norm, with five other hundred people there in wheelchairs. I find that very comforting.”

Golden Moments

The Wheelchair Games bring a common thread to all involved. Many people speak of the camaraderie that is shared between the athletes. On some level, each athlete knows where the others have been and where they are going.

Each person has a different story, but there is a connection that is felt by the athletes from the moment they arrive until the Closing Ceremonies that unites them all. The athletes speak of the encouragement, the belief in each other, and most of all the empowerment the Games give them:

“Everyone is equal at the Games. We don’t worry about who has done what—we are all here to compete and have a good time.”- *Darrell Wilson, 47, Air Force, San Antonio, Texas*

“The best thing about the Games is seeing old faces, seeing how they are doing, and being able to encourage each other to get through anything.” - *Eugene Gold, 57, Army, Waialua, Hawaii*

“The Games have taught me to be a better person, that nothing is impossible, and that regardless of who wins, we are all winners in each other’s eyes.” - *Jo-Ann Rodriguez, 39, Army, Toa Baja, Puerto Rico*

“My golden moment was during a basketball game when Orlando Perez, who was on the opposing team, passed me the ball giving me the opportunity to make a basket. I shot and made it. This moment is something that I will remember forever—it was so empowering.” - *Centra Mazyck, 30, Army, Columbia, S.C.*

Positive attitudes, old friends and new friends, and fierce competition make the Games worth coming back to year after year.



Centra Mazyck

Ask Dr. Dan



Dear Dr. Dan,

I understand that the summer in Alaska is a short season, but the mosquitoes have to get in a lot of bites during that time. Do the mosquitoes here carry any diseases I need to worry about and how do I keep from being their next meal?

Afraid of the State Bird

Dear Afraid,

Mosquitoes are something to be wary of in Alaska, as they are here in even greater numbers than wheelchair athletes, but they do not transmit any diseases like West Nile Virus, at least not yet. No cases of West Nile or other worrisome viruses that insects have been known to carry have been reported in Alaska. The bites themselves are annoying, so here are some tips to cope.

■ Apply mosquito repellent to your skin, scalp and clothing if you are spending any time outdoors, not just if you think you will be gone all day fishing or out late at night (it's dusk for a very long time here).

■ Products containing DEET are the best insect repellents on the market, according to *Consumer Reports*. Not all brands contain the same amount, however, so read the label, and reapply if you have been out for more than 8 hours).

■ If you do get bit—and you probably will here—there are some simple things you can do that can make the bite less bothersome.

◆ Wash the area as soon as possible with mild soap and water; pat dry. This will reduce the itch and wash away bacteria on the skin.

◆ Try to avoid scratching the

bitten area, as scratching may cause damage to the skin, could cause bleeding, and may lead to infection.

◆ Apply a cool compress on the bite, such as a washcloth soaked in cold water, to reduce the urge to scratch. The icepacks supplied by our medical staff can also be used, but need to be wrapped in a towel to avoid skin injury from excessive cold.

◆ Anti-itch medications such as calamine lotion or cortisone cream can relieve itching for a significant period of time (like letting you sleep). Homemade remedies can be helpful as well. Applying cider vinegar to the bite or a paste of baking soda and water may be soothing for a couple of hours.

◆ Tremendously severe itching

can be helped by some skin anesthetics like the products PrameGel or Caladryl lotion.

Some people are actually quite allergic to mosquito bites, and need anti-inflammatory drugs such as Motrin, Advil or Aleve to reduce redness, pain, itching, swelling and fever. Severe allergic reactions may leave the person feeling dizzy or nauseated, and medical attention becomes an emergency. If you see someone experiencing these symptoms, or you are the person, call for help or come to the medical room immediately.

Don't let the bugs keep you from having fun. Consider them part of the wildlife here. Just make sure that bottle of Deep Woods Off is in your backpack and don't forget to use it!

Nomination Forms Ready for Spirit of the Games Award

The time is now to nominate someone for the prestigious "Spirit of the Games" Award! Each year since 1987, one athlete has been selected at the National Veterans Wheelchair Games to receive this very special award. Presented at the Closing Ceremonies, it recognizes an athlete who clearly demonstrates athletic excellence, sportsmanship and strength of character.

Do you know someone who meets these qualifications? If you do, please nominate him or her for the 2006 Spirit of the Games Award. Nomination forms are located in the dining area (Egan Center) and at each hotel at the hospitality desks. Completed nomination forms may be dropped off in the specially marked ballot boxes labeled "SPIRIT OF THE GAMES," located in the dining area. All nominations are due by noon on Thursday, July 6.

Fourth of July Parade Details

"The Price of Freedom" is the theme for this year's Fourth of July Parade. What better way to start off the parade than with military veteran athletes participating in the 26th National Veterans Wheelchair Games! You may want to consider wearing your team shirts for the parade procession.

Staging for the parade will take place in downtown Anchorage on G Street between 8th and 9th Avenues. Buses will drop athletes off at the Egan Convention Center. From the Egan Center, cross the Street through Town Square and proceed south down F Street to 8th Avenue. Turn right on 8th Avenue and go one block to G Street. It's an easy push to the staging location. The parade route is approximately one mile long. A limited number of volunteers will be available to push those who request assistance. Please plan to arrive at the staging area between 9 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. **Everyone must be in place by 10:30 a.m.**

And ...



we're ...



off!