

Ski Gram Newsletter

Thursday, March 31, 2011

Clinic a Road to the Paralympics

The National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic and other VA National Rehabilitative Programs and Special Events are designed to not only provide rehabilitation, but to inspire Veterans to move beyond their injuries. Nowhere is the success of these programs more visible than in those athletes who surmount their challenges and become world-class athletes. Several past National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic participants have worked and trained hard to be Paralympians. Chris Devlin-Young and Chad Colley are two such Clinic veterans turned Paralympic athletes. Both are among a team of Paralympic athletes visiting the Clinic this year to ski alongside Clinic participants.

Chris Devlin-Young, a Coast Guard veteran, competed in his fourth Paralympics at the 2010 games as an alpine skier. Devlin Young had his first exposure to adaptive skiing at the first National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic.

Devlin-Young says he was reluctant to participate in the first clinic in 1985, three years after a C-130 aircraft crash left him a paraplegic. He was mad at the world about losing use of his legs and had little interest in trying out skiing, he says.

But the first time down a hill, he was hooked. "It gave me adrenaline and control. It gave me my life back," he says.

Like Devlin-Young, Chad Colley was first introduced to adaptive skiing during the formative years of the Winter Sports Clinic. An Army Vietnam Veteran, Colley lost both his legs and an arm.

Inspired by what he learned, Colley went on to become the winner of two Paralympic Gold Medals for Alpine Skiing (downhill & Super-G) in the 1992 Winter Paralympics, held in Albertville, France. He was also a member of the U.S. adaptive ski team for a number of years.

After retiring from skiing, Colley served as part of the Presidential Delegation to the Opening Ceremonies of the 2006 Paralympic Winter Games, held in Torino, Italy.

Colley has served in numerous positions with Veterans associations, including as National Commander of the Disabled American Veterans.

He was also selected by President Reagan as Handicapped American of the Year, and for three decades has been a voice for disabled Americans speaking at corporate, governmental and civic entities across the country.

Colley says he's not out to make every participant at the winter sports clinic a ski racer. "What we want to do," says Colley, "is expose them to the potential they might not even know they have."

Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Eric K. Shinseki says he is "blown away" by what he sees at the Clinic. Although he acknowledges that not every disabled veteran who aims to become a Paralympian will make it. "In fact, the vast majority of them won't," he says. "But the vast majority of them will have a chance to live life differently than they might have had they not had this Clinic experience."

Even if they never get selected to the Paralympics, "if they live the rest of their year with the same drive and energy and commitment and discipline about being the best, they are going to live different lives," says Shinseki. "It is not going to be a life of dependence and regretting what might have been. They will discover that there is a lot of living left to do, and they will go out and get it."

The winter sports clinic offers a window to what's possible, Shinseki says. "For us, Snowmass is about giving that opportunity – that rehabilitative, recuperative opportunity – to discover their own miracle," he added.

Sandy Trombetta, founder and director of the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic, calls these Paralympians' accomplishments an example of "the great things that veterans with disabilities can achieve."

To this year's participants, Sandy poses this question: "Who among you will be the next to break down your personal barriers and represent our country in the next Paralympics?"

Volunteer Army

It takes an army of volunteers and staff to pull off the largest adaptive winter sporting event in the world - the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic. In this issue, we take a look at some of the dedicated volunteers and staff who make the Clinic a success.

Before we begin, let's take a look at the numbers: This week, there are 549 volunteers, including 143 VA staff volunteers. These volunteers fill a number of key roles, such as the all important food and beverage coordinators, our trusty ski equipment repair team, the alternate activities staff, the transportation crew, the boot loaders, and of course the folks who make this all possible – the ski instructors.

Each day at the Clinic begins with the welcoming smile of Mary Lane as she greets Veterans at breakfast. Together with Jeanie Gechter, the two have attended every Clinic since 1987. Back then, Lane was a conference coordinator at the Holiday Inn in Grand Junction, host hotel for the first Clinic, and Gechter was a past National Commander of the Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary. The next year, Dixie Aljets joined the team and they've been working together ever since. Many of them take vacation from their regular jobs to volunteer at the Clinic. They feel proud to be a part of the event's history. "Just to be a small part of this is so rewarding," says Lane. "I wouldn't have it any other way."

After tearing it up on the slopes, Veterans can try a range of other activities – from scuba diving and snowmobiling to curling and sled hockey. Annie Tuttle, a public affairs officer from the Loma Linda, Calif., VA Medical Center, who volunteers at the alternate activities desk, says their job is to make sure that Veterans make the most of all the activities offered here. Tuttle, who has worked the alternate activities desk since 2006, says the team is a mix of volunteers and VA staff who bring great experience. Some of the team members, like Joe McNabb, regularly volunteer at VA medical facilities. A retired Air Force Colonel, McNabb learned about the Clinic seven years ago while volunteering at the Dallas VA Medical Center. He says coming to the Clinic fires him up and keeps him motivated throughout the year.

Of course, none of this would be possible without the team of 176 ski instructors. Some, like Tony Brozena, are here for the first time. An Air Force Veteran and adaptive ski instructor since 1997, Brozena is on the Board of Directors for the New Mexico Adaptive Ski Program. He says he is "blown away" by the experience here at the Clinic. Nearby, instructor Lynne Beernaert has just finished her lesson with Gileen Paschal, a Navy Veteran who is skiing for the first time. Paschal is thrilled by her experience on the mountain. Beernaert, who is a volunteer with the New England Handicapped Sports Association, looks on affectionately. "That's the reason we come here, gratitude and appreciation," she says.

Let's Get to Twistin'

A legend in pop music drops into the Clinic tonight to provide a free concert. Chubby Checker will take the stage tonight at 8 p.m. in the Conference Center Ballroom.

Born Ernest Evans in South Carolina and raised in South Philadelphia, PA, he earned the "Chubby" nickname as a teen.

With a natural gift for imitation, he enjoyed impersonating the styles of his musical heroes Fats Domino, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Elvis Presley. He began performing in churches and on the streets with his singing group, The Quantrells, and soon attracted the attention of music executives in Philadelphia.

Checker signed with Cameo-Parkway Records in 1959 and was encouraged to make his own version of “The Twist,” a song originally written and performed by Hank Ballard. But it was Checker’s version and his accompanying dance routine that gave the song new life. He was dubbed “The King of the Twist.” In fact, it was Dick Clark’s wife who came up with the name Checker, a reference to the similarity between the portly singer and Fats Domino.

An appearance on Dick Clark’s American Bandstand launched Checker’s version of “The Twist” to the No. 1 billboard spot in August 1961, where it remained on the charts for 18 straight weeks. In November of that year, it reentered the charts again for a record-breaking 21 weeks. With this formidable achievement, “The Twist” became the first and only 45 single to ever appear in the No. 1 spot in two different years.

Checker continued to capitalize on the twist theme with similarly titled songs, such as “Twistin’ U.S.A.” and “Twist it Up” in the early 1960s, and even “Let’s Twist Again” in 1999. He also starred in two films featuring the twist sensation, *Twist Around the Clock* (1961) and *Don’t Knock the Twist* (1962).

Make sure to swing by the Conference Center tonight for a great show by a pop music icon and get out on the dance floor!

My HealtheVet

My HealtheVet is VA’s award-winning online Personal Health Record, at www.myhealth.va.gov.

It offers users anywhere, any time internet access to their health care information, as well as other helpful health oriented resources and tools. My HealtheVet is the gateway to web-based tools that empower Veterans to become active partners in their health care. With My HealtheVet, users access trusted, secure, and informed VA health and benefits information, all at their personal convenience.

In Memorium: Aspen’s Cowboy Poet

The 25th National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic is a magnet for unique, talented disabled veteran athletes, volunteers and supporters.

But this year’s event has a hole in it that could only be filled by a Cowboy Poet.

Tom Munn, Aspen’s very own “Cowboy Poet,” died earlier this month at his home in the Roaring Fork Valley.

“Tom Munn was a friend to every veteran at this Clinic. We made him an Honorary Marine at one of our Marine Corps Night parties because of his love for the troops,” said Clinic participant John Divine, a longtime friend of Munn’s.” He wrote songs and poems about veterans and their sacrifices. I will miss him terribly.”

Munn was a fixture at the Clinic ever since the event moved to Snowmass Village. Clad in a heavy, weather-beaten black leather jacket and matching cowboy hat, he strummed his guitar, sang frontier tunes, and blended poetry and folk storytelling to Clinic guests.

Munn was more than a pretty face and a guitar. He was the genuine article and a rare creature—an actual cowboy. He plied this rough trade on area ranches since the 1970s.

From Erie, Penn., Munn was born in 1944. Much of his biography is littered with tall tales, spectacular feats, and strange occurrences.

Munn lived and died on his own terms. He was a man of principle and character. He leaves all of us here at the Winter Sports Clinic in need of a song about cold and windy nights, whiskey in a flask, and bright stars above a snow-covered mountain.

Craig Morgan Tonight

When Craig Morgan was ten years old and on a school field trip to Nashville, he sang “The Star-Spangled Banner” well enough to catch the ear of a distinctive older lady in the crowd. “She walked up to me and said, ‘Son, someday you’re gonna be a famous singer,’” Morgan remembers. Two-plus decades later, he’d be looking at a picture of the woman—Minnie Pearl—in the Ryman Auditorium

dressing room that bears her name, getting ready for his first performance on the Grand Ole Opry. What Minnie didn't know was that before his moment in the spotlight finally came, Morgan would be an EMT, a contractor, a sheriff's deputy and a Wal-Mart assistant dairy manager. He'd also spend ten years serving his country in the U.S. Army.

He spent 10 years on active duty in the US Army, and goes overseas to perform USO shows every chance he gets. "Sometimes you walk away feeling regret: that I should be there with them still," he says. "But I'm starting to appreciate what I can do now for those men and women outside of being a soldier. Doing stuff for the USO will always be a priority for me." Morgan received the 2006 USO Merit Award for his involvement, joining the likes of Steven Spielberg, Elizabeth Taylor, and Bob Hope as a recipient.

Morgan is now one of country music's most beloved performers. "That's What I Love About Sunday," from Morgan's 2005 album *My Kind of Livin'*, was the most played country song that year. Three songs off of *Little Bit of Life* enjoyed stays in the Top 10, and he was nominated for Top New Male Vocalist by the Academy of Country Music in both 2006 and 2007. Truth is, you can't tune in to a country station anywhere in the US without hearing a Morgan song within the hour. But he's also just a bit like that actor everybody knows and recognizes from a movie or TV show, yet can't quite place how they know them. "People know the music," Morgan says. "When they come to my shows, they might know the latest single, or they may know an old song. But sometimes I can read their lips: they're going, 'oh, I didn't know he sang that one!' Or, 'I forgot about that song!'"

Morgan performs for Clinic participants, staff and volunteers tonight at 8pm in the Conference Center Ballroom.

What Are You Saying?

If they made a movie about your life, who would play you?

Ricardo Renteria

US Navy

Phoenix, AZ

"I'd have to say Johnny Depp, since we both have an adventurous spirit."

Linda Kearby

US Air Force

Dallas, TX

"I'm going to say Ellen Burnstyn for her balance of humor, bawdiness, boldness and elegance."

Robert Satterwhite

US Army

Stem, NC

"I'd have to say Cuba Gooding, Jr. We kind of look alike, and he is just a great actor."

Rene Peterson

US Army

Kansas City, MO

"Charlie Sheen, of course, since we've both got tiger's blood!"

Wayne Ross

US Air Force

Scituate, MA

"Matthew McConaughey would be perfect...he's witty and charming."

Prosthetics Post

The Prosthetics Post is the place to get the answers for your most frequently asked prosthetics questions.

Dear PDP,

I am a non-service connected veteran. I am not old, but I have severe diabetes and peripheral neuropathy. I need to make my bathroom more accessible to my medical needs. Am I eligible for any monetary benefit? If so, how much would it be?

Signed, House Needs Help

Dear HNH:

Prosthetics offers a grant that may be able to help you! It's called the Home Improvement & Structural Alterations grant (HISA). The HISA grant provides necessary improvements and/or structural changes to the Veteran's residence for the following purposes: (1) to allow you to enter and exit your home, (2) to allow you use of essential lavatory and sanitary facilities, such as a bathroom or kitchen, (3) to allow better access to kitchen or bathroom sinks or counters, (4) to improve entrance paths or driveways to help with access to your home, or (5) to improve plumbing or electrical systems necessary due to dialysis equipment in your home.

The HISA grant is a lifetime grant, with a benefit limit for Service Connected (50% or more) Veterans currently at \$6,800 and \$2,000 for Non-Service Connected Veterans (and SC at less than 50%).

You will need to meet with your Primary Care Provider to discuss your medical condition(s) related to your home modification needs. Rehab plays a key role regarding potential needs and options. Once you have provided a detailed medical justification for your request for home modifications, a Prosthetic Representative will work with you directly to keep the process as smooth as possible for you. A committee will review your case and provide you a written decision regarding your request as soon as possible. You can read about the HISA Program here:

<http://www.prosthetics.va.gov/HISA2.asp>

MASSAGE

Complimentary massages are available, by appointment; from 1 - 4 p.m. and 6 - 9 p.m. Massage is located in the Elbert room in the Silvertree Hotel. Please call (970) 430-9373 to schedule an appointment.

WHEELCHAIR AND PROSTHETICS REPAIR

Located at the Host Room in the Conference Center.

Hours are:

6:30 a.m. - 8:45 a.m.

11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

4 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.

In between these hours this person (Don) can be reached @ 970-430-9417. Please do not call after 6 p.m. unless it is an emergency. If you need to contact the Prosthetics Repair person (Joe) please call 970-430-9415.

Medical Room

For emergencies dial 911

Medical room phone:
(970) 923-8330

Location

The medical room is located in the Bedford A conference room, one level below the mall, across the street from the Mountain Chalet Hotel. Stairway access from the mall is next to *Christy Sports*. Wheelchair access is by elevator at the far end of the mall above the bus terminal.

Transport

Van transport is available from the Silvertree Hotel to the medical room. Find the medical van in the front of the hotel or call the medical room to arrange transportation.

After Hours

Call the medical room for recorded instructions on how to contact the “on call” medical provider. If unsuccessful, call the hotel operator.

Menu

Today’s Lunch

Chicken Noodle & Tomato Basil Soup
Turkey or Ham Sandwiches

Today’s Dinner

Spinach Salad with Red Pepper and Feta Cheese with Vinaigrette Dressing
Spaghetti with Bolognese Sauce
Meat Lasagna
Zucchini with Red and Yellow Peppers
Italian Bread and Butter
Variety of Desserts

Tomorrow’s Breakfast

Fresh Sliced Fruit
Oatmeal with Granola, Raisins, Sliced Bananas, Almonds & Skim Milk Assorted Breads/Muffins
Sausage and Bacon
Breakfast Potatoes
Omelet Bar with Cooked-to-Order Omelets to include Ham, Cheese, Mushrooms, Peppers, Fresh Tomatoes, Green Onions, and Salsa
Fresh Ground Coffee, Decaffeinated Coffee, Herbal Teas, and Assorted Chilled Juice

Transportation Schedule

Snowmobiling

First Trip 6:45 a.m. 7:15 a.m.

Second Trip 9 a.m. 9:30 a.m.

Please make sure to load at the correct time for your assigned trip.

Sled Hockey 7:45 a.m.

Fly Fishing 8:30 a.m.

Cross Country Skiing

First Trip 8:20 a.m.

Second Trip 1 p.m.

Buses will run up and down the mountain throughout the day. The 1 p.m. bus will pick up any participants

Hot Springs 9:30 a.m.

Shooting Sports 10 a.m.

Aspen Gondola 10 a.m.

Curling 12:45 p.m.

Event Schedule

6 a.m. – 5 p.m.	Host Room: Conference Center
6:30 – 8:30 a.m.	Breakfast: Conference Center Ballroom
8 – 11:30 a.m.	Snowmobiling: T Lazy 7 Ranch
8:30 - 11:30 a.m.	Downhill Skiing: Baby Ruth, Showcase, Fast Draw
9:30 a.m. – 3 p.m.	Fly Fishing Float trip on the Crystal River: Carbondale
9:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.	Glenwood Springs; Lunch at Elks Lodge, Hot Springs
9 a.m. – 3 p.m.	Cross Country Skiing, Snowshoeing, Biathlon
	Introduction (Top of the Village); Elks BBQ Lunch at Top of the Village
9 – 11a.m.	Scuba Diving: Silvertree Hotel Pool
9 – 11 a.m.	Sled Hockey: Lewis Ice Arena, Aspen
10 a.m. - Noon	Rock Climbing: Conference Center Circle
10:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.	Aspen Trip, Lunch at Elks Lodge, Mountain Gondola Ride
11:15 a.m. – 1 p.m.	Lunch: Conference Center Ballroom
11:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.	Shooting Sports/Archery: Basalt Trap Club
12:30 – 3:30 p.m.	Downhill Skiing: Bear Bottom, Head Wall, Lodge Pole
1 – 3 p.m.	Rock Climbing: Conference Center Circle
1:30 – 3:30 p.m.	Curling: Aspen Ice Rink
2 – 4 p.m.	Scuba Diving: Silvertree Hotel Pool
4:15 – 5 p.m.	Ski Instructor Meeting: Eldorado Room, Silvertree Hotel
4:30 p.m.	Team Leader Meeting: Stone Bridge Inn, Council Meeting Room
5 p.m.	Coaches Meeting: Max Park Room, Wildwood Hotel
4:30 – 6 p.m.	Dinner: Conference Center Ballroom
6 - 7:30 p.m.	CEU Educational Workshop: “Therapeutic Beading Working with Minds and Hands Promoting Personal Healing and Confidence” Aspenwood Meeting Room, Fall Lane Presented by, Laurie Jo Elisha
6:30 – 8 p.m.	Instructional Workshop: “Self Defense for the Visually Impaired” Max Park Room, Wildwood Hotel Presented by Special Agent Mark Copanzzi, U.S. Secret Service
7:30 – 9 p.m.	CEU Educational Workshop: “Introduction to Blues Harmonica” Aspenwood Meeting Room, Fall Lane Presented by, Terry Tully and John Devine
8 – 11 p.m.	Entertainment: Conference Center Ballroom Craig Morgan
6 a.m. – 5 p.m.	Host Room: Conference Center