

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE 24<sup>TH</sup> NATIONAL DISABLED VETERANS WINTER SPORTS CLINIC

# Ski Gram

TUESDAY EDITION • MARCH 30, 2010

## It's Better in a Group

Group Skiing Sessions help hone your skills

## Volunteers

Heart of the Clinic

## Whatchoo talkin' 'bout Willis?

Your answers to the question of the day

## More Prosthetics Post



# Volunteers

# Make the

A **force** of more than **800 volunteers** amassed in Denver, Snowmass, and Aspen to ensure the **353 Veterans** attending the 24th Annual National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic experience **a week to remember**, restart and rejuvenate their souls.

“We provide a full-service experience for the Veterans that come, so it takes a lot of people,” said Kris Baugh, Voluntary Service Specialist at Grand Junction VA Medical Center and key volunteer coordinator for the Clinic. “From the time Veterans arrive in Denver to the time they go back on their planes to their homes, there is never a moment when a Veteran should feel unappreciated. Our volunteers ensure they are up on time, motivated all week and that all their needs are met.”

Volunteers fulfill all kinds of roles at the Clinic: instructing and catching on the ski slopes, coordinating and cheering at alternate activities, moving Veterans, handling luggage, providing educational courses, public affairs services, information technology, food services and any other need that may arise.

“They go way above and beyond to make sure we are safe, comfortable and happy this whole week,” said John Maher, an Air Force Veteran. “Hopefully they realize how grateful we are because their sheer joy in being here is incredible and infectious.”

Veterans on the slopes aren’t just grateful to have a lot of volunteers at the Clinic, it’s the kind of people volunteering who show up year after year that brings grins to their faces.

“They do so much for us, but they aren’t in our face, molly-coddling us or showering us with sympathy,” said Fred Colson, a Coast Guard Veteran at the Clinic for the first time. “We joke, laugh and share stories. There is some true bonding here.”

The shared experiences between Veteran and volunteer create genuine friendships on the slopes, in the dance halls, and at impromptu parties throughout the week. Stories also abound of practical jokes and challenges more descriptive of siblings than servers.

“They must check the sense of humor on the volunteers before they can come,” Maher said.

“They are all so great and they get us, that we want to be treated like anyone else. It’s more than a job for these guys and it shows. It’s a relationship.”

Many of the volunteers shared the same smiles and stories when talking about the Veterans they serve. In fact, some of them insist they return each year to serve for their own, selfish reasons.

“Oh, I wouldn’t miss this,” said Thirza Johnson, who retired from the Department of Veterans Affairs in 2006 yet has returned to the Clinic for her 16th straight year. “I do it for me as much as I do it for the Veterans. The Clinic is the most rewarding, challenging and wonderful experience I’ve ever had. Each year, I see lives changed and I get to be part of it. Veterans who came here thinking they could never have active lives again, leave talking about competing the next year and I got to play a part in that change. Where else can you do that?”

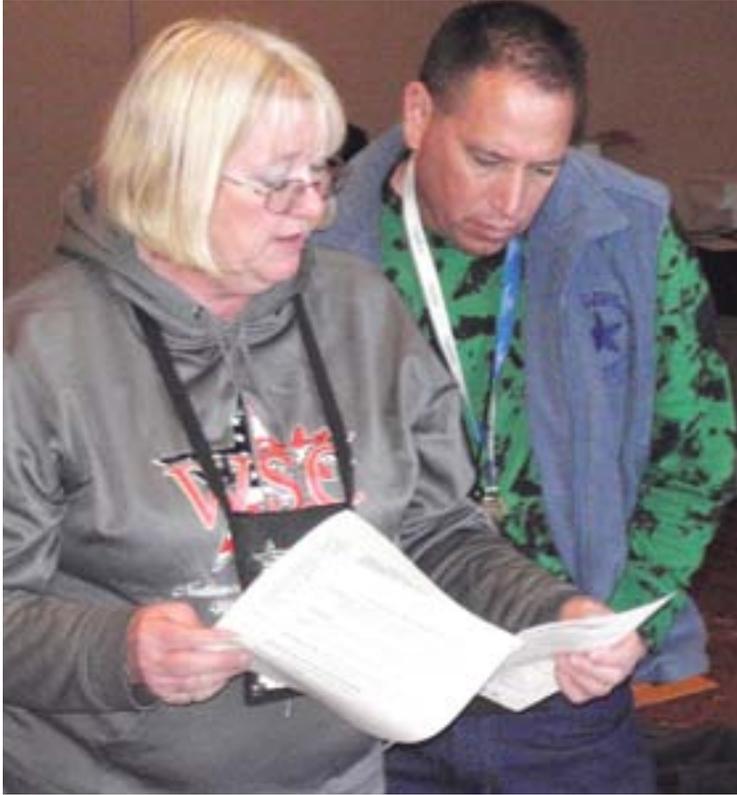
Indeed, the emotional high of wielding life-transforming power becomes so addictive, some volunteers pay their own way back to Snowmass to be able to serve Veterans and make miracles on the mountain once again.

“It’s an amazing experience. Try it once and you are hooked,” said Kristen Reinhart, who has returned from Chicago for her second year on her own dime. “Last year, I saw an 80-year-old Veteran ski for the first time and I don’t know if I’ve ever seen a bigger smile. I would never have imagined such joy like that in my wildest dreams, but once I saw it, I had to come back.”

According to Baugh, the biggest asset a volunteer needs is the ability to motivate.

“As the week progresses, the events can get a little overwhelming, especially for first timers,” Baugh said. “Our challenge as volunteers is to keep the week exciting instead of tiring and I am really proud of the people who come here each year able to do that.”

# Difference



*Kris Baugh, Voluntary Service Specialist at the Grand Junction VA Medical Center and key volunteer coordinator for the Clinic considers the Clinic her "happy place." Tristan Heath looks on.*

As Baugh sees it the draw of changing a Veteran's life for the better makes recruiting volunteers an easy task and explains how the volunteer force more than doubles the participants. Still, there is a second draw Baugh and her fellow volunteers readily admit to. Just as many Veterans return to the Clinic year after year for the camaraderie of their fellow Veterans, the volunteers keep returning to rekindle the bonds of fellowship forged from serving those who served them first.

"It's like coming home. We become family," Baugh said, smiling at fellow volunteers who offered hearty nods. "We all share a sense of honor to be here and it leaves a lasting impression. Yes, we put a lot of work into the Clinic, but we get so much more in return. The rest of the year, when the inevitable doldrums of office life set in, I'll take a few moments to remember the Clinic, the Veterans and my fellow volunteers, and I'm ready to keep going. What else can I say? This is my happy place."

## TBI Support Group

This evening, from 6 to 8 p.m., there will be an open session for any Veteran with brain injuries and their family members. The session will be moderated by Cheryl Lynch, mother of a brain injury survivor Chris Lynch, and founder of American Veterans with Brain Injuries. This organization was founded in 2004 as a grassroots effort to share information and assist all other service members and families who are dealing with brain injuries. This is the fourth year this peer support session has been held at the Winter Sports Clinic and the number of participants has grown each year. Tonight's session will be held in the Max Park Room at the Wildwood Lodge.

## Adaptive Sports and Recreation Equipment Information Session

If you're interested in the most current information and updates for pursuing adaptive sports and recreation equipment, this is a session you won't want to miss! Today there will be two sessions to accommodate this popular topic. Both will be in the meeting room at the Aspenwood Condos on Fall Lane. The sessions will be at 6 and 7:30 p.m.

Whether you are a Veteran participant, VA staff member or adaptive sports instructor, this session will allow you to understand the range of adaptive technologies available through VA's Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Service, and the process for pursuing sports equipment at your local VA facility. We will provide a review of specific eligibility criteria, recommendations for working closely with your VA clinical staff to determine the appropriate equipment, and tips to navigate the process efficiently. We will also review the range of sports technologies that qualify as "adaptive," as well as the equipment customization available to support comfort, support, skin protection and performance. Resources will also be identified for pursuing equipment that is not inherently adaptive (like standard skis, boots, poles, snowboards, bicycles, etc.), so that every participant is aware of the options available.



**THE DAY IN PHOTOS** A pictorial review of all the things that went on yesterday!



# What Did You **SAY?**

Every day this week, we'll go out and ask one question. Here are your responses.

## QUESTION

What are you most looking forward to at the Clinic this week?



**James Atkinson**  
Largo, Fla.  
*Army*

"This is my first time skiing totally blind, so I'm just looking forward to staying in one piece."



**Trey LaFitte**  
Laurel, Miss.  
*Marines*

"This is my first time...I'm just excited about trying new things."



**Dana Liesegang**  
Grand Junction, Colo.  
*Navy*

"Making new friends and carrying on this tradition."



**Aubrey Youngs**  
Chicago, Ill.  
*Army*

"Meeting new people and being inspired by their stories."



**Michael McCoy**  
Hampton, Va.  
*Air Force*

"Going all the way to the top and conquering the highest peak around!"

## On the **MENU**

### Breakfast

Fresh sliced seasonal melons & fruits  
Oatmeal w/granola, raisins, almonds, skim milk & bananas  
French toast w/warm maple syrup  
Bacon, Sausage  
Breakfast potatoes  
Scrambled eggs w/salsa  
Coffee, Decaf, hot teas  
Assortment of chilled juices

### Lunch

Hot dogs, hamburgers, veggie burgers  
Vegetable sticks w/ranch dip  
French fries  
Cottage cheese

### Dinner

Spinach salad w/red pepper & feta cheese with vinaigrette dressing  
Spaghetti w/Bolognese sauce  
Meat lasagna  
Eggplant parmesan  
Zucchini w/red & yellow peppers  
Italian bread & butter

## GLBT Dinner and Social

Members and friends of the GLBT veteran community are invited for dinner and drinks at the **Sweet Life Restaurant** tonight from 7 to 10 p.m. Stop by for drinks and meet fellow gay veterans and friends and unwind from the day's exciting events.

Contact Brian at (970) 948-7743 or Wendy at (760) 810-3735 for more information.

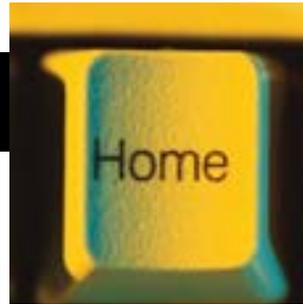
## Friends of Bill W.

A Friends of Bill W. 12-Step Recovery meeting will be held daily from 4 to 5 p.m. throughout the week. Meetings will be held in the Janss Auditorium on the second floor of the Snowmass Convention Center and will be hosted by Kim Yee.

All of those in recovery are encouraged to attend for friendship and support.

STAY

## CONNECTED!



Looking for a place to check e-mail or update your Facebook status about your Clinic activities? Computers are available for you to use in the Kearns Room on the second floor of the Snowmass Convention Center. The room is available from 8 a.m. – 6 p.m. each day. Many thanks to VA staff and sponsors for providing this service to National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic participants and guests!

TWEET!  
TWEET!



**VA is now on Facebook and Twitter!** Start at [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov), or search each site for the Department of Veterans Affairs to find exclusive content! Watch daily video highlights, news, and important information from the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic. So log on and share your experiences.

## Show Your Appreciation!

Ernest Shackleton, an Antarctic explorer of the early 20th century, was quoted as saying “Difficulties are just things to overcome, after all.” Please join us tonight to honor the instructors who work so tirelessly to help our Veterans overcome some of their own “difficulties” on the mountain. The Instructor Appreciation Party is from 8 p.m. - midnight in the Conference Center Ballroom. Be ready for a good time – there are no difficulties expected.

## Lost Camera

A silver Canon camera in a black Samsonite case was lost at the Clinic! An SD memory card was also in the case. If anyone happens to come across the camera in their travels this week, a reward is being offered for its return. Contact Josh Sharp at (850) 418-4749.

## Group Skiing Opportunities

Every day through Thursday, there will be group skiing opportunities at 8:30 a.m. and again a 12:30 p.m. Look for the Group Meeting signs beyond the docks on the slopes. Group sessions will be lead by advanced level ski instructors. The sessions will place an emphasis on technique, skiing varied terrain, intense mileage and, more importantly, having fun while improving your personal performance out on the slopes. Video recordings will be made and a critical review of your technique will be available. These group sessions will be for high intermediate and advanced level skiers (mono, 3-track, 4-track, standard equipment, visually impaired) as well as snowboarders (either standard or adaptive equipment). You will attend the group program with your assigned ski instructor.

## The Prosthetics Post

Welcome to another edition of the daily “Prosthetics Post” column in the Ski•Gram! This is where you can get answers to your frequently asked questions regarding VA Prosthetics Service. Don’t forget, prosthetics professionals are here this week to answer your questions. Make sure to visit the information booth at meal times. Our Web site is always available for more information:

[www.prosthetics.va.gov](http://www.prosthetics.va.gov)

### Question of the day:

Dear Prosthetics Post:

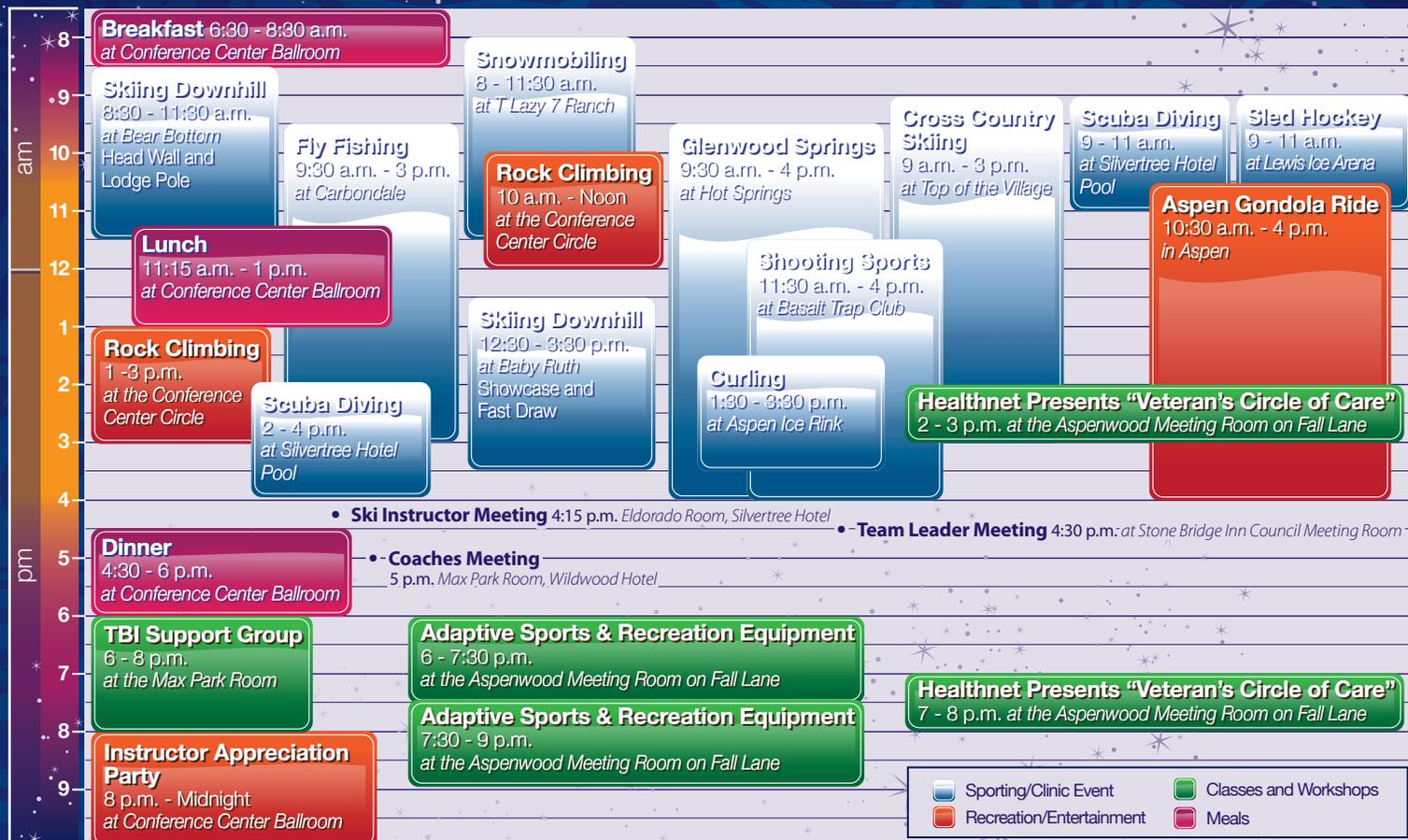
I use my wheelchair full time. What happens if my wheelchair breaks?

*Sincerely, Wheely Interested*

**Dear Wheely:** Veterans who are issued a wheelchair by VA are eligible for a spare wheelchair and cushion. Additionally, service-connected Veterans who are issued a wheelchair by VA will be provided a Prosthetic Service Card. The card provides emergency funding up to \$300 should your wheelchair need repairs after hours or on the weekend. You should always contact your local prosthetics service during regular business hours.



# Schedule for Tuesday March 30, 2010



## The Bulletin

### Massage

Complimentary massages for participants are available by scheduling an appointment. Massage is located in the Elbert room in the Silvertree Hotel. Please call (970) 589-2434 for call for appointments from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Appointments taken until all slots are full.

### Wheelchair and Prosthetics Repair

Located at the Host Room in the Conference Center.

Repair hours are:

6:30 - 8:45 a.m.

11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

4 - 5:30 p.m.

In between these hours please call (970) 589-2154 for wheelchair assistance, and (970) 589-2519 for prosthetics needs. Please do not call after 6 p.m. unless it is an emergency.

### Medical Room

**For emergencies dial 911**

Medical room phone:

**(970) 923-8225**

The medical room is located in the Bedford A conference room, one level below the mall, across the street from 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 for 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.

### Transportation Schedule

Event	Load
<b>Snowmobiling</b>	
First Trip	6:45 a.m.
Second Trip	9 a.m.
<i>Please make sure to load at your correct time.</i>	
<b>Sled Hockey</b>	7:45 a.m.
<b>Fly Fishing</b>	8:30 a.m.
<b>Cross Country Skiing</b>	
First Trip	8:20 a.m.
Second Trip	1 p.m.
<i>Buses will run up and down the mountain throughout the day. The 1 p.m. bus will also pick up any participants from the first trip who wish to return to the Conference Center. All remaining participants will be picked up at 3 p.m.</i>	
<b>Hot Springs</b>	9:30 a.m.
<b>Trapshooting</b>	10 a.m.
<b>Aspen Gondola</b>	10 a.m.
<b>Curling</b>	12:45 p.m.