

Largest Annual Wheelchair Sports Event in the World Returning to Richmond this June

Registration Now Open for Veteran Participation

WASHINGTON (Jan. 10, 2012) – Registration is open for the 32nd National Veterans Wheelchair Games, the largest annual wheelchair sports event in the world. More than 500 Veterans from across the United States, Puerto Rico and Great Britain are expected to compete in the Games, taking place June 25-30, 2012, in Richmond, Va. – the site of the very first National Veterans Wheelchair Games held in 1981.

“The National Veterans Wheelchair Games are an outstanding event that showcases the abilities and determination of Veterans,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “VA is committed to providing world class care to our wounded heroes.”

The Games, presented by the Department of Veterans Affairs and Paralyzed Veterans of America, are open to all U.S. military Veterans who use wheelchairs for sports competition due to spinal cord injuries, neurological conditions, amputations or other mobility impairments. The 32nd Games will be co-hosted by the Hunter Holmes McGuire VA Medical Center and the Virginia Mid-Atlantic Chapter of Paralyzed Veterans of America.

“We’re thrilled to see the National Veterans Wheelchair Games return to Richmond after 31 years,” said Bill Lawson, national president of Paralyzed Veterans of America. “Adaptive sports play a crucial role in getting people back into life after serious injury, and the Wheelchair Games are often a life-changing experience for our athletes, representing a unique combination of competition, rehabilitation and fun.”

The Games are made possible through the generous support of national host sponsors, Altria Group, Invacare and UPS.

Competitive events will take place at the Greater Richmond Convention Center, Hanover Lanes Bowling Center, The Conservation Club of Virginia, Inc., in Charles City, Sports Backers Stadium, Mary Munford Elementary School and Byrd Park. The 32nd Games will include competitions in 17 different events such as swimming, basketball, table tennis, archery, and wheelchair slalom, which is a timed obstacle course. The athletes compete in all events against others with similar athletic ability, competitive experience or age.

In addition to the competitions and the opening and closing ceremonies, the Games will include a "Kids Day at the Games" on Friday, June 29, at Sports Backers Stadium. Local children with disabilities will have the opportunity to interact with the athletes, participate in sporting events, and watch Veterans compete.

Veterans interested in competing may download the registration packet from the Games' website at www.wheelchairgames.va.gov or contact Marlene Pratt at (804) 675-5000, ext. 3969, or Kristin Windon at (804) 675-5002. The deadline for interested athletes to complete their registration is April 15.

The public is invited to attend any of the sports competitions throughout the week of the Games, and admission is free.