

# Sports Programs for Disabled Veterans Expanding

## WASHINGTON

**The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is awarding two grants totaling \$7.5 million to the U.S. Olympic Committee to enhance recreation and sporting activities for disabled Veterans and disabled members of the Armed Forces.**

“Many of our Veterans have experienced traumatic injuries while at the peak of their physical conditioning,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “Our partnership with the U.S. Olympic Committee will aid in their recovery by allowing them to engage in therapeutic sporting events and competition right in their own communities.” Additionally, Christopher J. Nowak has been selected to be the director of the VA Paralympics Program Office.

Under terms of the grant agreements, funding will be provided to the Olympic Committee’s member organizations, Paralympic sports clubs and Veteran and military organizations nationwide to implement community-based, physical activity programs for disabled Veterans and disabled members of the Armed Forces. Disabled Veterans can locate adaptive sporting events in their communities by visiting the U.S. Paralympics Web site: [www.usparalympics.org](http://www.usparalympics.org).

Public Law 110-389 authorized VA to award grants to the U.S. Olympic Committee to plan, manage and implement an adaptive sports program. “This support from Veterans Affairs will have far reaching impact in communities around the country,” said Charlie Huebner, chief of U.S. Paralympics. “We know that sports and physical activity can have a transformative effect on those with a physical disability.” “These funds will help our community partners to expand and provide greater access to sports programs for

injured Veterans, disabled members of the Armed Forces and all living in their local area with a physical disability,”

Huebner added. “Since 1999, Nowak has served as a prosthetics manager for VA Healthcare Veterans Integrated Service Network 4, which includes Pennsylvania, Delaware and parts of West Virginia, New Jersey and New York. A 17-year veteran of VA, he directs a \$92-million budget and all prosthetics operations for 10 VA medical centers. Nowak joined the Marine Corps 1983. His military career ended in 1987, when the then-infantry squad leader lost his right leg to friendly fire during a routine training exercise. He is a champion of sports rehabilitation for wounded soldiers and Veterans. He has developed and co-chaired "First Swing" and "Next Step" golf clinics for amputee Veterans and is a former member of the USA Amputee Hockey Team.