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**Wheelchair Inspiration – National
Veterans Wheelchair Games**

Lead: America's veterans have often paid a terrible lingering physical and mental price for their service. The National Veterans Wheelchair Games helps many rise above their suffering.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: After World War II, many surviving servicemen came home severely handicapped. The loss of limbs and other types of physical incapacity compounded

the normal struggle in readjusting to civilian pursuits. Through the G.I. Bill many went on to complete college, but the nation also provided ongoing rehabilitative services to terribly wounded veterans. One of the ways these former servicemen grabbed-on to a life approaching normalcy was athletic competition. Instead of just sitting around, men began to play basketball in the gymnasiums of Veteran's hospitals throughout the United States. Soon interest in basketball inspired competition in other sports such as bowling, archery, and track and field events. People who thought they would never again be able to do something they had done with

relative ease in a previous life, saw their hopes and dreams, albeit altered by their circumstances, made alive again.

Three generations later, the U.S. Veterans Administration began to turn this opportunity into policy. Recognizing the therapeutic and restorative value of athletic competition, the VA established in 1980 the Recreation Therapy Service. One year later, during the “International Year of Disabled Persons,” it inaugurated the National Veterans Wheelchair Games at the McGuire VA Medical Center in Richmond Virginia.

Four years later, Paralyzed

Veterans of America became a joint sponsor and, because of the costs associated with assisting scores of mostly paralyzed participants, together the sponsors began recruiting national corporate support. Today, hundreds of wheel-chair bound athletes compete each year in a wide variety of events including table tennis, weightlifting, swimming, and billiards. The Games remain an inspiration to participants, their care-givers and those who come to witness the near heroic survival and triumph of America's heroes on wheels.

In Richmond, Virginia, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

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