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Friday, April 9, 2004

Vol. 18 Number 6

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## Inspirational Women -- Heroes Behind the Scenes

Sharon K. Palmer, Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System

This is Cheryl Lynch's second year at the Winter Sports Clinic -- not as a participant, volunteer, or casual observer -- but as a mother. Her son, Chris Lynch, was engaged in training exercises with the 307th 82nd Airborne in Montaboune, France. On July 13, 2000, a tragic twenty-six foot fall changed both of their lives.

"I was home alone when the call came," said Cheryl. "The Captain said that Chris was in an accident, and he's alive. At that point, my heart dropped into my stomach, and I asked, 'what does that mean?'" The chilling response from the Captain was, "He's in a coma."

The nightmare had begun. From hospitals in France and Germany, then to Walter Reed, the Tampa VA Medical Center, and back to Walter Reed, Cheryl was with her son every step of the way. She sat through every hour of every therapy session, hanging on to every word and soaking up all the information she could to help her son when they got home. They returned together to their home in Pace, Fla., in May 2001, to begin the long journey to reclaim Chris' life.

The Army had meant everything to Chris. Now it was reality -- time to face the music and get on with life. "As a mother, you love and encourage. You spend your life preparing your child to be safe and face life independently," said Cheryl. "The injury took away his independence. Chris again became the entire focus of my life -- I became a mother again."

Cheryl knew what they'd been through so far was "a piece of cake" compared to what lay ahead. "At first, Chris' determination to reclaim his life was my motivation, my strength," said Cheryl. "I knew there was no way out of this, and that what Chris wanted to do was beyond the capabilities of normal therapy."

As a mother, Cheryl has questioned her objectivity many times. "I've often asked myself if I'm doing what's really best for Chris," she explains. "It hurts to watch him struggle with simple things, but I have to step back and then I have to constantly make the call on when is the right time to step in and help. A mother's instinct to protect her child is always there, but at this stage in his recovery, I need to let Chris make decisions on his own."

To illustrate her continual dilemma, Cheryl used the analogy of a mother bird pushing her baby bird out of the nest. "It's natural to send them out into the world, but the second time around, you don't push them out of the nest so fast because you know they've gotten hurt."

**WOMEN see page 10**

## ACTIVITIES SCHEDULE

- 8:00 - 11:00 am Downhill Race:  
Spider Sabich Race Center
- 8:30 am Cross Country Ski Race
- 10:30 am - 2:30 pm Medal Presentations:  
Snowmass Village Mall
- 11:30 am - 2:30 pm Taste of Snowmass:  
Snowmass Village Mall
- 1:00 pm Downhill Race:  
Spider Sabich Race Center
- 7:00 pm Closing Ceremonies;  
Conference Center Ballroom
- 9:00 pm Victory Celebration;  
Conference Center Ballroom  
*JT & The Big Dogs*

### Prosthetic & Wheelchair Repair

Conference Center

Host Room

6:30 - 8:45 am

11:00 am - 1:00 pm

4:00 - 5:30 pm

In between those hours:

Wheelchair Repair, Call Don:

710-9500

Prosthetic Repair, Call Joe:

710-9098

2004 National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic Website

<http://www.va.gov/vetevents/wsc/2004/>

**WEATHER  
CORNER**

Today

50% Chance of  
Rain/Showers

UV Index 6 - Moderate

Today's High: 47

Tonight's Low: 24

Saturday

40% Chance of  
Snow Showers

Today's High: 38

Tonight's Low: 21



## Important Luggage Notice!



Pages 8 and 9 of today's newsletter contain a letter from the hotels with directions on what to do with your luggage on departure day. Please look at the specific instructions for your flights. Contact the Bell Captain if you have questions.

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## Be Part of a Special Photo!



We have arranged to have a group photograph taken to send to newspapers across the country. All those who can, please assemble in the Snowmass Village Mall awards area **no later than 10:00 am today.**

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### Medical Information for Participants

PHONE: (970) 923-5184

#### Medical Emergencies:

- Call 911 for an ambulance for transport to the local emergency room.

#### Non-Emergent Care, 8:00 am - 9:00 pm:

- The Bedford 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 to get to the medical room level is using the elevator at the far end of the mall above the main bus terminal.

#### Transport:

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

#### After Hours:

- Call the Silvertree Hotel operator at "0" or (970) 923-3520, who will contact the doctor on call.



## **Till We Meet Again ...**

Our sincere thanks to all of the participants who so willingly shared their stories this week at the 18th National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic. We've been busy preparing news releases about you, and articles for the daily *SkiGram*, working with more than 10,000 news media to let people know about the Clinic, getting the inspiring photographs of you participating in all of the various events, and posting lots of information of the Clinic web site.

When you get home, please check out the web site at <http://www.va.gov/vetevents/wsc/2004/> and tell your friends and family to take a look as well. If you wanted a news release and we got a photograph of you skiing, it will be there under your name.

Many thanks to all the team leaders, coaches, instructors, and other staff and volunteers who helped us throughout the week -- telling us about interesting stories and photograph opportunities, tracking down interviews, and helping us get quotes and missing information. Your help was invaluable.

As always, we go home inspired by all we have seen and heard this week, and we thank you for reminding us not to be limited by the challenges we face, but to let those *Miracles on a Mountainside* keep happening each and every day. We look forward to seeing you in Snowmass Village next year!

### **The 2004 Winter Sports Clinic Public Relations Team**

Willie Alexander  
Bill Browning  
Kim Byers  
Elaine Buehler  
Gene Davies  
Jim Haines

Lupe Hernandez  
Mike Hormuth  
Jeff Honeycutt  
Bob Klear  
Mike Lay  
John Markowski

Butch Miller  
Trish Moore  
Joe Nguyen  
Richard Olague  
Sharon Palmer  
Bob Pederson

Meredith Steiner  
Jenny Tankersley  
Tammy Thomas  
Annie Tuttle  
Jeff West

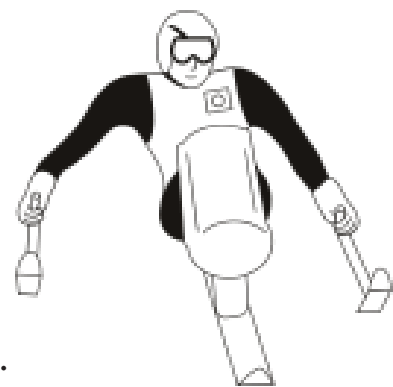
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## **Disabled Winter Sports Survey**

The University of Florida is conducting a skiing and snowboarding study. Specifically, the study will investigate the perceived constraints faced by people with disabilities when participating in winter sports, versus the reality of your experience.

The survey form can be completed on line and will take 8-10 minutes to complete. If you would like to participate in the study, the web site address is:

<http://hhp.ufl.edu/surveys/snowplay.html>



# Getting Ready for Race Day!



Christine Treiber  
Greeley, Colo.



Karen Christine  
Colorado Springs, Colo.



Joseph Clarke  
Smithville, Ga.



Jesus Zapata  
Port Hueneme, Calif.

## Women are Veterans Too!

Jenny Shafer Tankersley, Hampton VA Medical Center

Ask Sherri Craven what makes her experience at the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic so unique and she'll quickly tell you that it's the support and camaraderie of the women veterans attending this year!

Craven is among this year's 33 women attending the Clinic. A Navy veteran from St. Louis, Mo., stationed on the USS LY Spears in the late 70's, Craven jokes with her roommate, Ruth Kult, an Air Force veteran from Belleville, Mo., about breaking the mold coming into the military. "We didn't come in as a secretary or nurse, we jumped into the all-male military world," Craven said.

Although she credits her incredible novice ski experience to her instructor Beth Hannington from Canada, Craven attributes her incredible personal experiences at the Clinic to the wonderful women veterans she has met. "The best part of the Clinic is the sense of freedom that you feel, but the other part is being with the new friends you have found," said Craven.

Another female veteran, Patricia Fuchs, an Army Nurse, shared the same spirit. Fuchs volunteered for Desert Storm, but her sons were split on their support of this action. She had one said who said, "Way to go!" But the other son said, "Hell no!" This is the sixth year Fuchs has participated in the Clinic. She attributes her liveliness today with "finding the Clinic." In 1992, Fuchs suffered a massive stroke and could only move one finger on the side of her body affected. Now, she's much improved and feels that the Clinic is a big part of her recovery.

In a message to all women veterans, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi said, "The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is committed to meeting the unique health care needs of our Nation's 1.4 million women veterans. The VA health care system is now focused on disease prevention, early detection, health promotion, and ease of access."

The Winter Sports Clinic is yet another way that VA, supported by veterans service organizations, strives to provide a seamless continuum of care and services for female veterans.



Sherri Craven

## Race Day Team Schedules

Friday, April 9, 2004

<u>Team</u>	<u>Skied on</u>	<u>At</u>	<u>Race Day Time Slot</u>
Grey Wolf	Monday	8:30 am	8:00 am -- show up
Naked Lady	Monday	8:30 am	8:30 am -- race
Sunnyside	Monday	8:30 am	

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Bonzai	Monday	12:30 pm	9:00 am -- show up
Free Fall	Monday	12:30 pm	9:30 am -- race
Sheer Bliss	Monday	12:30 am	

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Granite	Tuesday	8:30 am	10:15 am -- show up
Rock Island	Tuesday	8:30 am	10:45 am -- race
Sneaky's	Tuesday	8:30 am	

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Moonshine	Tuesday	12:30 pm	11:30 am -- show up
Slider	Tuesday	12:30 pm	12:00 pm -- race
Wildcat	Tuesday	12:30 pm	

Dear Guest:

On behalf of the Silvertree Hotel, Wildwood Lodge, and Village Property Management, I hope you have had an enjoyable stay here in Snowmass Village. I would like to take a moment to present the details of your departure on Saturday April 10, 2004.

We will leave the hotel for the airport every half hour. I have included recommended times to help you better plan your morning.

The airport has provided tags that will organize your bags by your flight number. Please stop by the bell stand (at The Silvertree Hotel) and present your flight information to one of the attendants to receive these tags and have them on your bags when putting them outside of your room!!!

If after reading this you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the bell stand at ext. 8252 during the hours 5:30 A.M – 12:00 midnight. Outside of those hours please contact the front desk with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Seth Kaplan  
Bell Captain

\*\*\* PLEASE NOTE: Those on flights 5656, 5650, and 5668 must have their bags out **before they go to bed**. Those on flights 5664 and 5654 must have their bags out by **6:00 am on Saturday**. Remember this before you go to the Victory Celebration on Friday night!



The departure schedule is as follows:

- 1) Flight 5656 departing at 7:01A.M. Red
  - a. Bag Pull: **Please have your bags outside your room before you go to bed Friday night.**
  - b. Recommended departure time: 5:00A.M.
- 2) Flight 5650 departing at 8:30 A.M. Blue
  - a. Bag Pull: **Please have your bags outside your room before you go to bed Friday night.**
  - b. Recommended departure time: 6:30A.M.
- 3) Flight 5668 departing at 8:31A.M. Green
  - a. Bag Pull: **Please have your bags outside your room before you go to bed Friday night.**
  - b. Recommended departure time: 6:30A.M.
- 4) Flight 5664 departing 9:10A.M. Yellow
  - a. Bag Bull: **Please have your bags outside your room at 6:00A.M.** Recommended departure time: 7:00 A.M.
- 5) Flight 5654 departing at 9:35 A.M. Black
  - a. Bag Pull: **Please have your bags outside your room at 6:00 A.M.** Saturday morning
  - b. Recommended departure time: 7:00A.M.
- 6) Flight 7083 departing at 10:40A.M. Orange
  - a. Bag Pull: Please have your bags outside your room at 7:00A.M.
  - Recommended departure time: 8:00A.M.
- 7) Flight 7093 departing at 12:00P.M. Light Blue
  - a. Bag Pull: Please have your bags outside your room at 9:00A.M.
  - Recommended departure time: 10:00A.M.
- 8) Flight 5660 departing at 1:00P.M. Green
  - a. Bag Pull: Please have your bags outside your room at 10:00A.M.
  - b. Recommended departure time: 11:00A.M.
- 9) Flight 5672 departing at 1:05P.M. Yellow
  - a. Bag Pull: Please have your bags outside your room at 10:00 A.M.
  - b. Recommended departure time: 11:00A.M.
- 10) Flight 7075 departing at 1:55P.M. Black
  - a. Bag Pull: Please have your bags outside your room at 11:00A.M. Saturday morning.
  - b. Recommended departure time: 12:00P.M.
- 11) Flight 5680 departing at 3:55P.M. Red
  - a. Bag Pull: Please have your bags outside your room at 12:00P.M. Saturday afternoon.
  - b. Recommended departure time: 2:00P.M.
- 12) Flight 7087 departing at 4:45 P.M. Blue
  - a. Bag Pull: Please have your bags outside your room at 12:00P.M.
  - b. Recommended departure time: 3:00P.M.
- 13) Flight 7055 departing at 6:20P.M. Orange
  - a. Bag Pull: Please have your bags outside your room at 12:00P.M. Recommended departure time: 4:00P.M.

## **WOMEN from page 1**

Cheryl has been told many times that she's in denial – that Chris will never be who, or what he was. Even friends and family don't seem to understand. But, year by year, she sees progress -- reflections of Chris' personality as he was prior to the accident. Quite impressively, Chris maintains a 3.9 GPA in his pursuit of an Associate Degree in Recreation Technology. He hopes one day to become a recreation therapist. "It's easier to repair the 'physical' problems," Cheryl said. "Chris can do a lot of that himself. His cognitive difficulties are the real challenge." Chris and his mother are tackling that one day at a time.

As a mother, Cheryl Lynch sees through the façade and pretense, knowing when her son is afraid or hurting. Every day, they sit down and talk frankly about what happened that day, both good and bad. Since Day One, they've kept a daily journal which is posted on Chris' own Internet site for their own 'therapy,' as well as to benefit others. Cheryl says she's cried with joy because of Chris' achievements, and she's cried out of pain during his trials. But she does see some good having emerged from Chris' situation. "If it hadn't been for the injury, I would never have had this close, intimate relationship with Chris," she said.

If you talk with Cheryl Lynch, you'll see, hear, and feel the pride she has for her son and how far he's come. Both she and Chris will tell you she's not a "caregiver." Rather, she's been dubbed a "life skills coach." When it comes to deciding what's best for Chris, she's followed her instincts – and her heart.

David Fowler and his wife Marilou are familiar faces at the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic. The Fowlers, who have been married for nine years, live in Houston, Texas and have attended eight Clinics.

It's hard to say that Marilou Fowler is a "caregiver," per se. "David is very independent," she said. "His positive attitude uplifts me – he's my inspiration."

A member of the 2/504th Parachute Infantry Recon, David Fowler sustained serious injuries during a parachute drop in 1984, leaving him paralyzed. He was 'in the chair' when he and Marilou met and began their relationship. "My friends asked if I was going to marry him," she said. "He's high maintenance." Even David was somewhat concerned. Marilou absolutely glowed when she explained so eloquently that the chair didn't matter. "I've never seen him in a chair," she says, "and I don't treat him like he's in a chair."

Most sincerely, Marilou conveys how proud she is of David, and all he's become. She admits things haven't always been easy – there have been ups and downs, and some struggles, but it's obvious they have a wonderful relationship that many others would envy.

Marilou says David's attitude carries them through. She believes that David has accepted that he's not going to change, that he is who he is, and that life goes on. "He's happy with himself, and wants to share his experiences with others and encourage them," she said. "He's come to terms with it."

According to Marilou, David not only shares, but inspires everyone who comes into contact with him, including other quadriplegics. His buddies affectionately call him "SuperQuad," or "Puff Daddy."

Marilou says her “caregiver” role is minimal because of David’s incredible independence and desire to remain active. She helps him with the simple things (like eating or picking up things) and an attendant comes three hours each day to assist with showers and routine daily needs. “David is skilled in using the computer,” Marilou says. “He’s also quite the athlete. At the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, he bowls, shoots air guns, competes in the slalom course and plays wheelchair soccer.”

Despite his disability, Marilou says community service is important to her husband. “David has said he wants to be more involved in the community,” she explains, “but he was afraid he couldn’t do it physically. I said I’d do whatever it takes to support and help him.” And she does. Thanks to Marilou, David speaks regularly to school children, sharing with them his incredible story of overcoming seemingly insurmountable challenges. He is also the President of the Texas Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America.

With the Fowlers, it’s hard to say who inspires who the most, but their mutual love and respect is very apparent. Very openly and spontaneously, Marilou perhaps best expressed her feelings by saying, “I love him to death.”

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## **THE MAD HATTERS**

Sharon K. Palmer, Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System

Jerry and Bill Braun travel together to ski at the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic and the reason is quite obvious – they’re married. This is the fourth year the Brauns have made the trek out west from Augusta, Ga., to participate in the Clinic. This year marks the first time “Journey,” their blue healer/border collie mixed breed dog has traveled with them. Journey, who has been part of the Braun family for the last year, is a trained hearing dog.

“Journey alerts us to the phone, door bell, fire alarm, oven timer, and other important sounds,” Jerry said. “She’s actually Bill’s dog and hearing-trained, but she’s much more – she takes care of things in other ways.” Jerry said that Journey once alerted Bill when she fell out of her wheelchair. Trained in Oregon, Journey is also quite the TV star, appearing recently in a CBS news segment.

The Brauns love life, and bring that fun spirit to the Winter Sports Clinic. You can spot them easily each year at the Opening Ceremonies wearing tall red, white and blue top hats with flashing lights. Affectionately called the “Mad Hatters,” their hats display the autographs of many keynote speakers from various events.

Jerry began seriously preparing for the Clinic last December. “This was my first year to have my own ski,” Bill said. “That was my Christmas present from Jerry.”

Thanks to fun-loving folks like the Brauns, there’s never a dull moment at the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic.