



Thursday, April 8, 2004

Vol. 18 Number 5

Exceptional Dogs for Exceptional People

Jenny Shafer Tankersley, Hampton VA Medical Center

What do Emma, Vance and Otto have in common? They're all service dogs participating in this year's National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic.

Service animals are legally defined (Americans With Disabilities Act, 1990) and are trained to meet the disability-related needs of their handlers who have disabilities. Service animals are not considered "pets" although it is easy to see from the stories that follow that they share a special relationship with their owners.

Emma, a one and a half-year-old yellow lab and Forrest Ward, a 34-year-old Marine veteran from Miami Beach, have been together for four months. But it is easy to see that this is a perfect match. Emma is trained and performs such functions as retrieving dropped objects, opening doors, turning on and off lights, as well as opening the refrigerator and getting drinks out. She also helps pull Ward through carpeted areas and those surfaces difficult for him to navigate. The quintessential service dog, Emma performs another vital function for Ward. When he falls from his chair, Ward simply has to put one hand on Emma's head and one hand on his chair and she helps him get back into the chair giving him the leverage he needs.



Emma & Forrest

The dogs are trained to perform a variety of tasks according to the specific needs of the individual. The needs are as unique as these dogs. For example, Bill Thayer's guide dog, Vance, is a beautiful silver standard poodle. They have been together for two years. Vance is only one of approximately 30 poodles in service in the United States. It is clear that his presence is not only support to Thayer but provides great peace of mind to his wife of 42 years, Mary. "I don't have to worry about him getting lost or tripping on a curb with Vance at his side," said Mary.



Vance & Bill

DOGS see page 4

ACTIVITIES SCHEDULE

- 8:30 - 11:30 am Downhill Skiing: Moonshine, Wildcat, Slider
- 8:30 am - 3:00 pm Cross Country Skiing, Snowshoeing: Ashcroft Ski Touring Center
- 9:00 - 11:00 am Scuba Diving: Silvertree Hotel Pool
- 9:00 - 11:00 am Sled Hockey: Aspen Ice Rink
- 10:00 am - 12:00 pm Rock Climbing: Conference Center Circle
- 11:30 am - 4:00 pm Shooting Sports & Archery, Basalt Trap Club
- 12:30 - 3:30 pm Downhill Skiing: Rock Island, Granite, Sneaky's
- 1:00 - 3:00 pm Rock Climbing: Conference Center Circle
- 1:00 - 4:00 pm Horseback Riding: Carbondale
- 1:00 - 6:00 pm Trip to Aspen & Dinner at Elks Lodge: Conference Center Circle
- 2:00 - 4:00 pm Scuba Diving: Silvertree Hotel Pool
- 4:30 pm Ski Instructor Meeting: Silvertree Hotel, El Dorado Room
- 4:30 pm Team Leader Meeting: Stonebridge Inn, Council Room
- 7:00 - 8:30 pm "Twin Keys" Dueling Pianos I
Conference Center Ballroom
Rated "PG"
- 9:30 - 11:00 pm "Twin Keys" Dueling Pianos II
Conference Center Ballroom
Rated "R"

**WEATHER
CORNER**



50% Chance of Showers

UV Index 7 - High

Today's High: 50
Tonight's Low: 31

MEALS SCHEDULE

Conference Center Ballroom

Breakfast 6:30 - 8:45 am

Lunch 11:00 - 1:00 pm

Dinner 4:00 - 5:15 pm

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

Instructional Workshop **Self Defense for the Visually Impaired**

Special Agent Mark Copanzzi
United States Secret Service
Max Park Room, Wildwood Hotel
7:30 - 9:00 pm

CEU Opportunities

Animals as Teachers and Healers
Kearns Room, 2:00 - 3:30 pm

Using Recreation to Decrease or
Prevent Secondary Conditions for
Veterans with Disabilities
Kearns Room, 6:00 - 7:30 pm

Yoga: Why Everyone Who Tries It,
Likes It!
Kearns Room, 7:30 - 9:00 pm

Making Molehills out of Mountains – Conquering Challenges

by Sharon Palmer, Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System

Being off of skis for twelve years didn't deter Allan Doyle, a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom, from coming to the 2004 Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic. His first time here, Doyle smiles warmly as he talks about the great time he's having this week.

"According to the instructors," says Doyle, "there are ten levels of skiing ability. The first morning, I was at level one or two, but by the afternoon I'm told I was about a six. Now I just need some fine tuning."

Doyle said he's having lots of fun, meeting great people, and finding lots of educational opportunities; however, the activity he speaks most excitedly about is the climbing wall. For Doyle, 'the wall' has special meaning. The young veteran explained that his injury, and subsequent loss of his lower left leg, occurred while climbing a wall in Iraq. "I was the first one to climb the wall," says Doyle. "I wanted to do it."

Doyle says he'll be back next year. No doubt he'll again face and conquer the challenges of 'the mountain,' and 'the wall.'

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.



DOGS from page 1

Edward Reyes of Kansas City, Mo., has had three-year-old Otto for the past year and four months. Otto is his second guide dog. Reyes says that guide dogs are a much better option to the cane. Rather than using the cane to help Reyes find his way, Otto lets him know when he is encountering a difference in pavement or there is a need to work around distractions. When Otto stops, it is an indication to Reyes that something has changed. This gives Reyes a chance to make the proper adjustments. With this partnership, Reyes says he can move fairly fast through any situation.

These dogs are among the many incredible animals that are in attendance this year. This article serves as salute to these exceptional dogs and their exceptional owners as they work in partnership for independence and safety!

The Veterans History Project -- Last Chance!

Today is your last chance to participate. Contact Butch Miller in the **Janss Auditorium** on the second level of the Convention Center, **8:00 am to 5:00 pm**.

Sore and Achey, In Need of Relief?

Chester's massage team is here to serve Clinic participants! If you're feeling a little beat up from your day on the slopes, call 710-9506, or visit the Caberet Room in the Silvertree Hotel, today from 9:00 am till 12:00 noon; and 2:00 to 6:00 pm. On Friday, hours are 9:00 am till noon.

Menu

Lunch today (11:00 am - 1:00 pm): Cole Slaw; Potato Salad; Ham, Turkey and Salami Submarine Sandwiches; Vegetarian Submarine Sandwiches; Brownies.

Dinner today (4:00 - 5:15 pm): Spinach Salad; Fried Catfish; Roast Beef Au Jus; Mashed Potatoes; Vegetables; Rolls; Coffee and Tea.

Breakfast tomorrow (6:30 - 8:45 am): Fresh Fruit; Oatmeal; Omelets; Sausage and Ham; Breads and Muffins; Coffee, Teas and Juices.

And the Fun Keeps Coming!



Dustin Simmons
North Bend, Ore.



Kevin Patton
Sacramento, Calif.



Sherri Craven
St. Louis, Mo.



Ron Magnus
Colorado Springs, Colo.

A Miracle of Friendship

by Meredith Steiner, National Programs and Special Events

Leo “Bob” Fair took it upon himself to raise \$2000 for fellow veteran Billy Sundberg. Mr. Sundberg has not participated in the Clinic since 2000 due to a lack of funds to cover expenses for his caregiver. Bob Fair, from the Bay Pines VA Medical Center, had heard through the grapevine that Mr. Sundberg needed money to cover the expenses. Not only did Bob Fair act immediately to ensure that Sundberg could attend, he donated the proceeds of the sale of his own NASCAR collectible jacket for part of the expense. “I did not know Billy beforehand but I know how valuable the Clinic is, so it just came natural to me to make sure he could attend,” said Fair. In addition, Fair and his AmVets Post 698 had a pig roast and then donated the proceeds to Sundberg. “How do you honor someone like this?” reflected Sundberg. “I was so surprised that Bob felt he had a need to do this for me. I know there is a big heart in him.” And this is not the end of the story about Bob Fair’s generosity; he plans to raise enough money for three more veterans to attend next year’s Clinic. Bob Fair is truly a miracle.



Bob Fair

Young at Heart, Ageless on the Mountain

by Sharon Palmer, Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System

If you’ve met Elmer Nelson, you’d never believe he’s 84-years-old. Actually, 84-years-‘young’ best describes this pleasant, very active gentleman who’s participating in the Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic this year for the first time.

Nelson, a World War II veteran who lives in a veterans home in Yountville, California, served in the Navy aboard the aircraft carriers USS Saratoga and USS Lexington. According to Nelson, he was aboard the Saratoga on December 7, 1941, and was scheduled to leave for Pearl Harbor the following day. They arrived a week after the attack. “The Harbor was covered in oil,” says Nelson. “Damaged ships had sunk in the shallow harbor waters.”

Nelson may be new to ‘the mountain,’ but he’s not a new skier. He skied for fifty-five years prior to his disability. Having normal vision until just a year and a half ago, Nelson said he skied Aspen in 1954, and has skied in Sun Valley many times through the years, prior to his vision loss.

Nelson learned of the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic from a caring Fort Miley Hospital staff member who was interviewing him about his visual impairment and health care needs. “She interviewed me and said she’d put me down for the trip,” says Nelson. “I was surprised. I wouldn’t have qualified two years ago.”

Only two days into the week, Nelson has caught ‘Clinic fever.’ “I’ll definitely be coming back,” he says. “The Clinic staff are very helpful.”

And what advice would Nelson offer to younger veterans before they hit the slopes? “Take lessons,” said Nelson.

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 Friday morning.**

***** Don't Forget to Vote! *****

There are six awards that you can vote on:

- The Linnie Howard Spirit Award, for the participant you feel best exemplifies the spirit of the Clinic;
- The Judy Shawo Commitment to Excellence Award, for the volunteer you feel demonstrates the highest commitment to the Clinic;
- The Sid Ford Award, for the VA employee you feel demonstrates the highest dedication to the Clinic;
- Best Cross Country Ski Instructor Award;
- Best Downhill Ski Instructor Award; and
- Best Team Leader Award.

If you haven't yet voted, please turn them in by **5:00 pm today.** The ballot boxes are located outside the host room.

OOPS! We apologize to **Harry Nazareus** for misspelling his name in yesterday's newsletter coverage of the goal ball event.

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.

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

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.