History of the Clinic

The National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic was created by the US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in 1987 with roughly 90 Veterans who were eager to learn to ski using adaptive ski equipment, and 20 staff members who helped them participate in a variety of adaptive activities and workshops. The idea for the Clinic originated in the early 1980s when Sandy Trombetta, founder and director of the Clinic, began bringing VA patients to a nearby mountain resort to participate in disabled ski programs. As a recreation therapist at the VA Medical Center in Grand Junction, Colorado, he recognized the physical and mental healing that skiing and other winter sports could provide to veterans with disabilities.

The popularity of the program became apparent by the steady climb in its participant base, and in 1991, the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) became a co-sponsor of the event. This milestone allowed the Clinic to grow and become the jewel in the crown of disabled sports that it is today. Each year, nearly 400 Veterans attend from across the country, along with 200 certified disabled ski instructors, several members of the U.S. Disabled Ski Team and countless volunteers.

Co-sponsored by VA and DAV, the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic attracts Veterans from across the country to participate in this annual learn-to-ski clinic for disabled Veterans. Ensuring Veterans receive world-class healthcare and rehabilitation is a primary goal of VA and DAV; the Winter Sport Clinic complements those efforts by providing opportunities for self-development and challenge through sports and leisure activities. The Clinic proves that a disability need not be an obstacle to an active, rewarding life.

Veterans learn Alpine and Nordic skiing and are introduced to a variety of other activities and sports such as rock climbing, scuba diving, curling, snowmobiling and sled hockey. U.S. Secret Service instructors also attend to teach self-defense to participants who are in wheelchairs or are visually impaired.

Participation is open to male and female U.S. military service veterans with traumatic brain injuries, spinal cord injuries, orthopedic amputations, visual impairments, certain neurological problems and other disabilities. Participants include Veterans from all eras, from WWII to Veterans from the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Find more information at www.wintersportsclinic.org