



Athlete Profile (Local)

John Wille – Local Veteran is Ready to Shine in Milwaukee

John Wille, a 65-year-old Air Force veteran from Brown Deer, Wisconsin, can't wait for the 27th National Veterans Wheelchair Games to begin. He helped out promoting the Games at a Wisconsin State Fair booth last summer, and now he is anxious for people to see and experience all the Milwaukee area has to offer. Wille says, "Milwaukee's world-class museums and zoo, professional baseball team in a wonderful stadium with an opening roof, one of the best lakefronts in the nation and so much more, will entertain and delight the participants and other visitors attending the Games."

More than five years ago, Wille experienced a not often seen spinal cord stroke that left him a paraplegic. He says, though, that life goes on. Realizing early on that his energy could be better spent, Wille says he didn't have time to waste feeling bitter. "My life hasn't really changed that much since my stroke, as I refuse to take a back seat to my health issues. I lead as normal a life as I can, doing many of the things I have always enjoyed because of the strong support I get at home and also from the VA health care system," he said.

When Wille entered military service, he was asked if he wanted to be a cook or a policeman. He chose policeman and served from 1962–1970, seeing duty in a number of countries around the world. After a brief stint as a private investigator, he joined the nearby Wauwatosa Police Department, working there for 28 years. Wille says that the statement "life begins at age 40" certainly proved very true for him, as that was his age when he married. Now, he is relishing life and reports that he found ages 50 and 60 to be even better.

This is Wille's first time participating in the National Veterans Wheelchair Games and he is looking forward to it. As a member of the Wisconsin Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) Board of Directors, a co-host of the event, he is well aware of the benefits the Games provide in offering new hope for individuals with disabilities as they get out and participate. "The Games are a big part of PVA's programming," he said. "I'm looking forward to the personal satisfaction of going out to participate and be part of the Games, to help show what people are capable of doing. If others can do it, look out – here I come! By participating, you can do good things for your body, so a lot is gained by activity," Wille said. A novice athlete his first year competing, Wille is signed up for the field events (both discus and shot-put) as well as bowling at the event, taking place in Milwaukee June 19-23.

"I encourage everyone to come out and experience the Games, be it as a participant or as a spectator, John Wille says. "You will be very pleased coming to Milwaukee. I salute all of my fellow participants as we seize this opportunity to demonstrate to everyone all that we can do. "