

## Challenged America hoist sails for injured vets



Challenged  
America

**San Diego's Challenged America program will hoist its sails for 100 recently injured veterans at the National Summer Sports Clinic hosted by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Sept. 28 to Oct. 3, 2008, from the San Diego Marriott Hotel and Marina.**

According to Bob Hettiger, a paralyzed veteran and the event's sailing-venue coordinator, 'A National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic has been a goal for us since we first started the Challenged America program in 1978. With 30 years of experience in teaching the recently disabled how to sail, these veterans from around the nation will discover an immediate sense of therapy and peace as they will be in control on the water, regardless of their newly acquired injuries. And they will be sailing with experienced sailors, many being veterans...and some even combat disabled too.' The first National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic (SSC) begins on Sunday, September 28, 2008, with a special opening ceremonies and dinner at Sea World. The Clinic's activities begin on Monday morning, Sept. 29, and ends on Friday, October 3, 2008, with a closing ceremony in the evening.

Clinic participants include recently injured veterans with traumatic brain injury (TBI), spinal cord injury, blindness, amputation, various neurological conditions, burn injuries, psychological trauma, and other recent disabilities. Recreational therapist, clinicians, and other healthcare professionals will also be active in the many daily, learning-experience venues, with each SSC veteran participant visiting a morning and afternoon venue each day of the Clinic.

The sailing venue starts at 9 am, Monday morning from the Marriott Marina, with sails hoisted on the Challenged America fleet, to include seven fully-accessible Martin 16's (a 16-foot, two-person, high-tech sailboat), the high-performance, ocean racing Kiwi-35 'Lift Off' and Custom N/M 43 'B'Quest II', **along with SailUSA-11.com's America's Cup yacht, 'Stars & Stripes.'** Chase boats in San Diego bay are being provided by Hipp Marine and Challenged America, with spectator boats offered to guests by members of local yacht clubs.

In addition to the daily sail venue, other Clinic venues to include: Kayaking (provided by FastLane Sailing Center), from Mission Bay Yacht Club on Mission Bay; Surfing, at La Jolla Shores, with instruction by the Amputee Surfers Association; Field & Track vents at the Chula Vista Olympic Center; and, cycling at the North Embarcadero.

A noon-time cannon salute to the veterans having lunch on the North Embarcadero, is being provided by the San Diego Maritime Museum's 'Californian' -- the State of California's Official Tall Ship.

'To provide both physical and psychological long term therapeutic value, the Summer Sports Clinic will introduce new and adaptive recreation sports activities, so the veteran can repeat the activity when they return home,' said Hettiger. 'Sports, and especially sailing, is such a valuable rehabilitation tool and key to someone with a disability successfully improving their health, returning to work and the mainstream again. I've seen this in my own life, and in those who participate in the Challenged America program. But it's up to the individual to continue, as rehabilitation never ends for many of us with disabilities...and that's why we began Challenged America.'

The National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic concept was first proposed to Sandy Trombetta, a recreational therapist at the Grand Junction, Colorado, VA Medical Center, by Urban Miyares, a blinded Vietnam veteran and Challenged America co-founding partner with Hettiger. Knowing the rehabilitation value and positive life-changing experience the VA sports programs provided to him in his rehabilitation, Urban's desire to include sailing in the VA's mix of sporting activities was paramount. He and Sandy worked together over the years to develop the SSC concept. In early 2008 the 'Clinic' was approved, and San Diego was selected as the site for the first such event.

There will be more than 200 volunteers helping, with an estimated 500 or more people in attendance -- many coming from around the nation to this year's National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic in San Diego.

First launched in 1978 by San Diego disabled veterans to enhance their own rehabilitation, Challenged America is a charitable 501(c)(3) program of the Disabled Businesspersons Association, based at San Diego State University - Interwork Institute. Providing free learn-to-sail and advanced sailing instruction to youth, adults and veterans with disabilities, and their loved ones, the volunteer-driven Challenged America program serves hundreds yearly, from its main dock facility on Shelter Island.

For additional information on volunteering or sponsorship of the VA's National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic, visit [www.summersportsclinic.va.gov](http://www.summersportsclinic.va.gov), or email Urban Miyares at Challenged America at [Port@ChallengedAmerica.org](mailto:Port@ChallengedAmerica.org), leave a phone message at (619) 594-8805, or visit [www.ChallengedAmerica.org](http://www.ChallengedAmerica.org)

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