

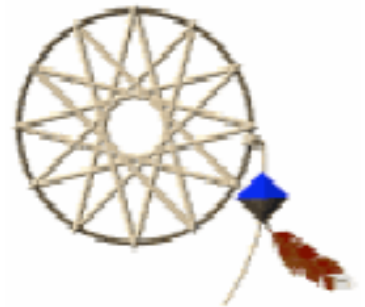
Miniwakan E-Newsletter

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome to our special issue on recreation and sports for people with disabilities. Many people in our workshops have requested more information on recreational activities. People with disabilities, family and staff members have complained that the focus has been wholly on education and job training. As one mother said, "How would you like it if 100% of your life was trying to be a better employee, keep house better, balance your checkbook more often and all that? Where is the time for the fun stuff that makes life worthwhile, like bowling?" Well, personally, I hate bowling, but I did get her point.



So... You asked for it, and here it is. Amazingly, when we asked around, we discovered that one of our consultants was one of the top pool players in the nation and a second had won medals in the Paralympics for judo. Who says we are all a bunch of boring, tech-y geeks? (Well, probably everybody, but you get my point.)

As always, we are interested in your comments, concerns, questions and stories. Email us at INFO@spiritlakeconsulting.com.

AnnMaria DeMars, Ph.D., SLC Vice-president

FEATURES

RECREATION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES: AS LIFE GOES ON

Maria Burns, SLC Staff Writer

Nowadays, most people are of the belief that just because a person is disabled it does not mean they are incapable of doing the everyday things that those of us without physical or mental handicaps take for granted. At the same time, however, many people may find themselves surprised to see a man with no arms talking part in archery or a wheelchair bound woman playing a game of pool.

As society has advanced becoming not only more accepting, but reaching a deeper understanding of the limitations, or perhaps lack of limitations, that a disability has on a person's life, more and more people with disabilities are finding recreational activities that they can take part in.

Special equipment as well as technology advancement and the growth of programs has led to a number of recreational activities that are geared toward those with disabilities so that they can take part in these hobbies either with others who are also disabled or with those who are not.

Just because a person finds himself paralyzed does not mean that he can't take part in the activities that those around him are enjoying. In the Midwest, hunting is an extremely popular pastime that some may believe those who may lack complete mobility are unable to partake in. However, equipment such as gun rests, like the VRS system produced by Lone Star Field products (<http://www.lonestarfieldproducts.com/>), which makes a wheelchair model, as well as more advanced wheelchairs that are made to withstand going through rougher terrain, make hunting a viable recreational option.

Additionally, many groups push to continually improve the rights and access to disabled hunters including the Alliance for Disabled Sportsmen Rights (<http://www.disabledrights.org>) and Disabled Hunters of North America (<http://www.dhna.org>). As a result of these groups' efforts, several states have recently passed legislation to provide equal access to disabled bowhunters using modified crossbows and the National Bowhunter Education Foundation voted to add a crossbow section to their courses that would allow disabled hunters to get certified by the NBEF. These groups can also be helpful in letting people know locations near them that maybe more easily accessible as well as offer advice or questions hunters may have. There are similar organizations for sport fishing as well and a simple Internet search or by contacting local organizations to assist those with disabilities will likely produce some results.

For those who prefer indoor recreation, leagues abound. Bowling is becoming increasingly popular. In many cases no real modifications need to be made. Those with more severe disabilities or limited motion, may wish to use modified equipment such as a snap handle ball for those who may have difficulty gripping the ball, which has a handle that retracts into the ball when released, or a bowling stick, somewhat like a shuffleboard stick, that can be used to help push the ball for momentum. The American Wheelchair Bowling Association of America is a great place to contact for more information to or to find if there is a league in your area (<http://www.awba.org>). A general improvement in non-slip floors at many bowling alleys has improved the experience for those who because of a disability have a difficult time keeping balance on the slick surfaces. For those with visual impairments, generally no modifications need to be made unless the bowler wishes. Again a number of leagues exist for bowlers with all types of disabilities and while specific leagues exist many people participate in local leagues where they are likely the only disabled bowler.

Similar leagues exist for other hobbies including pool or billiards, darts or virtually any other sort of recreation without any difficulty or major modification needed. It is important that those who wish to take part in these activities know that they are welcomed and that any modification is not a major burden, but just something that needs to be done so that all can take part.

While it may be reassuring for them to know that others who share their physical limitations and

recreational interests exist, they should at no time feel as though they are incapable of participating with those who are not disabled. Simple research or a quick phone call should be able to put you on track or in touch with organizations that can answer your hobby specific questions. A number of publications, such as Sports and Spokes or Access Disability Magazine, can be valuable resources.

WILLIE DAVIS: COUNSELOR, CONSULTANT, POOL SHARK

Maria Burns, SLC Staff Writer

Twenty-four years ago an accident left Willie Davis paraplegic. One day at a rehabilitation center undergoing physical therapy, Davis passed a pool table on his way to the cafeteria. He'd played pool recreationally before the accident and started playing the game regularly as a way to pass time.

After he left the center, he continued to play and his game steadily improved. In the beginning, he got involved with a few pool leagues, where everyone else was able-bodied. Then he came across information on the National Wheelchair Pool Association (866-636-3371 or <http://www.nwpainc.com>), an organization that runs wheelchair pool tournaments.

"When I started off, I was playing, against able-bodied guys," says Davis. "I didn't know there were hundreds of other guys in wheelchairs playing."

The NWPA has a circuit of monthly tournaments around the country that players can compete in for cash prizes. Membership is \$10 a year and the organization accepts playing and non-participatory members. The championship has even been featured on ESPN. Davis took part in these tournaments and became one of the best wheelchair pool players in the nation and ended the year ranked 5th.

Unfortunately, Davis has had to pull back from competing in recent years, because of arthritis, but says he still competes in one or two tournaments a year. He is also in a pool league team, where he is the only wheelchair player. The only modification that Davis uses for his game is a special bridge made for him by another wheelchair pool player. Difficulty finding regulation pool tables, something many bigger cities may have an abundance of, but places like the Turtle Mountain reservation area where he lives lacked, also made staying competitive harder.

Davis points out that all sports—whether the athletes are in a wheelchair or not—take a large amount of practice and conditioning to stay on top. Davis stressed that it's important to think about your longevity before taking part in any sport. That it's not just about going out and doing the physical activity and being done, but that taking care of your body after taking part in those sports is important. At the NWPA nationals held annually in Las Vegas, there is a massage therapist at the tournament. That makes a big difference, according to Davis, because it helps reduce soreness and other problems that can occur after playing four or five games in one day.

And Davis knows a thing or two about sports for those with disabilities. Over the years, he has taken part in numerous activities. For nearly eight years, he competed on a track and field racing circuit that covered several states in the upper-Midwest. He also participated in a wheelchair basketball league that competed against teams from across the state and regularly qualified for nationals.

Taking part in these activities, Davis says, builds camaraderie and a sense of identity for those who participate. Of course, it is also important that a person has the drive and interest to take part in such activities; otherwise, it's unlikely that he'll benefit from them.

However, the benefits are of taking part in recreational activities also go beyond the physical exercise. It can help build a sense of identity, Davis says.

What is also great about the experience, Davis says, is that it can bring people together. "We have diverse disabilities," he says about the other wheelchair pool players and himself, "But we have one thing in common, we love pool."

NOTE: Although he is too modest to mention it, Willie Davis received the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor of the Year Award for the Turtle Mountain Reservation, awarded by the Consortium of Administrators of Native American Rehabilitation (CANAR). He is also a consultant for Spirit Lake Consulting, providing training and website development for the Disability Access Project.

PARALYMPICS: COMPETITIVE SPORTS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Maria Burns, SLC Staff Writer



Many people are familiar with images of wheelchair basketball or road racing, such as in the New York Marathon, but people with physical handicaps have the opportunity to participate and compete in nearly every sport.

The most prominent of these events is the Paralympics, a global competition consisting of 19 sports from swimming to volleyball to judo. Sports may have different categories for those with more or less debilitating conditions. For example, those who have no limb function as a result of being paraplegic will be in a different category than those who may have only been born with a partial limb and as a result have partial use of that limb.

Paralympic events are held regularly and include not only the Paralympic Games, but also a world championship, British Open, Pan American Open and other major competitions. In general, athletes are self funded, something that can make it extremely hard as they are less likely to be able to receive the same funding, support and sponsorship Olympic athletes receive.

The Paralympics have a much greater age range than the Olympics. While age does not factor into any kind of competitive separation, several athletes in years past have been as young as 11 years old and others have been over 60.

A common confusion for people unfamiliar with the Paralympics is to associate it with the Special Olympics, a sports organization for people with intellectual disability where the focus is on the fun of sport and competition and not necessarily victory. The two are completely separate.

In 1996 at the Atlanta Paralympic Games, a pilot program was run to allow elite Special Olympic athletes to compete in the Paralympics. However, after it was discovered that the 2000 Spanish basketball team had 10 out of 12 members without any type of intellectual or physical disability on its team, a decision to only include physically disabled athletes was made. While blind athletes take part in the Paralympics, deaf athletes compete in a separate event called the Deaflympics.

The popularity of the Paralympics is growing and every year more athletes and countries take part. Paralympics conducted during an Olympic year are held at the same venue as the Summer Games. 3,969 athletes from 136 countries took part in the Paralympics and almost 800,000 event tickets were sold.

Tina Thomas of Los Angeles, Calif., has been competing in Paralympic events since the early 1980s. She started participating in swimming and track and field with the United States Association for Blind Athletes.

"It was great," she says about finding out about the USABA and the sports it offers because it demonstrated to her that "blind people can actually do this just like sighted people."

Thomas who had done judo in the past wanted to participate in judo at the Paralympic level, but at that time the program did not exist although people from inside were supporting its addition to the sports offered. After traveling around the country for demonstrative competitions, the sport was added in 1988, but only for men.

When it was finally offered in 1994 for women, Thomas won the world championships. She says the experience has been great because not only does she get a chance to travel—this year she will go to Brazil and England—but it allows people who might be able to compete, even with able-bodied or sighted athletes a chance to shine.

"For us, we probably will never be in the Olympics," Thomas says about Paralympic athletes. " We have a different style, but this is our way of saying we really made it in our sports."

Thomas also says that in her case practicing regularly with sighted athletes helps her as a competitor because if she can hold her own against competitors who have the advantage of being sighted, it will help her when she faces other competitors who are blind. She is the only blind person at her judo club and regularly fights in judo tournaments where everyone else is sighted. The only modification that is made for her is that she is allowed to get a grip on her competitor before the fight starts and that if she goes out of bounds she is not penalized.

While she has been fortunate to be at a club where no one really takes her lack of sight into account when practicing with her, Thomas says she has been in situations where she's felt that people are not being as aggressive with her as they would normally be because she is blind. However, in those cases Thomas says that she is able to remedy the situation. "Usually I just go after them long enough that they forget I'm blind or realize it doesn't matter and practice all out with me," she says.

Her only other real complaint is that she feels that Paralympics athletes are not always treated with the same courtesy given Olympic or other sighted or able-bodied athletes. Aside from problems with funding in some cases, she says that in her experience there has been some lack of organization. "Now they just

call you up six months before and say, 'Do you want to compete?' and then they might have a camp," she says. "It's frustrating sometimes that it's not more organized."

But Thomas says she has gotten a lot out of being on the Paralympics team. For one, being with the other Paralympic athletes who she says at one point "saw each other more than our own families" and, of course, the competition. "I plan on competing until I'm physically unable to do it," say Thomas. Currently she is training for the British Open, which she says "is just a stepping stone on the way to Beijing."

Tina Thomas is a consultant for Spirit Lake Consulting, Inc. on the Disability Access Project. She writes and reviews material on visual impairment and is responsible for software modifications to allow full access of our websites and CD-ROMs for people with visual impairment.

COMING EVENTS

CARING FOR OUR PEOPLE TRAINING

What it Covers:

- Using Internet and CDs to find what you need to know.
- Working with Native American Families of people with disability and illness: Guidelines , suggestions, practices that work.
- Introduction to disability – handling the shock of diagnosis, resources available, who can help
- Educational programs for infants, toddlers and school children with special needs.
- Elders – exercise and nutrition for elders.
- American Indian traditions – death and dying.
- Social issues – Abuse, Substance abuse
- Home-based care: Injury prevention, catheter care, disease control, pressure sores, administering medication.
- Health & Disability: Obesity, nutrition, exercise, substance abuse
- Finding information on specific disabilities: Traumatic Brain Injury, Diabetes, Depression, Epilepsy, Autism, Mental Retardation, and Fetal Alcohol Syndrome.
- Employment for people with disabilities.

WHEN?	WHERE?	WHO?
December 6, 9-3	FORT BERTHOLD	Trainers, Evelyn Klimpel, AnnMaria De Mars
December 10	SPIRIT LAKE RESERVATION, Spirit Lake Vocational Rehabilitation Project	Trainers – AnnMaria De Mars, Erich Longie
December 11	SPIRIT LAKE RESERVATION, Spirit Lake Vocational Rehabilitation Project	Trainers – AnnMaria De Mars, Erich Longie, Willie Davis

December 29 SPIRIT LAKE RESERVATION, Spirit Lake Trainers – AnnMaria De Mars, Willie Vocational Rehabilitation Project Davis, Leander McDonald
FORT BERTHOLD Trainers, Evelyn Klimpel, AnnMaria De Mars

WHY IS THIS TRAINING FREE? We are funded by grants from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research. After the grants end, there will be a charge for training.

For more information, call Erich Longie (701) 351-2175 or Derrick Dauphinais (701) 351-2667.

Or Email us at COPT@spiritlakeconsulting.com

End of E -Newsletter

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Spirit Lake Consulting, Inc.

P.O. Box 76

316 Circle Drive

Fort Totten, ND 58335

(701) 351-2175

<http://www.spiritlakeconsulting.com>

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