

## **Sports & Recreation**

Opportunities for persons with disabilities to participate in sports began more than 30 years ago, for fitness and recreational purposes. Since then, the sports movement has greatly evolved. All types of sports have been adapted for persons with disabilities. This includes creating various training techniques, formalized rules and adaptive equipment. In addition, numerous recreational sports clubs, organizations and facilities have been created to allow for a greater participation in various sporting and recreational activities. Hence, there are greater opportunities for competition and vast amounts of organizations for the person with disability interested in a sports and/or recreational programs.

The largest spurt of growth and development has occurred over the past two decades- including integration of athletes with and without disabilities in local sporting events; extensive public awareness, interest, and acceptance; publication of numerous, diversified programs and competitive events for children; and increased media coverage. This latter reached a high point in 1984 when the world watched television coverage of the summer Olympic Games including two exhibition track events for athletes (men and women) who use wheelchairs to compete and when wheelchair racing champion George Murray became the first athlete with a disability to be pictures on more than three million boxes of *Wheaties* cereal!

Since these early break-throughs, athletes with disabilities have competed annually in the U.S. Olympic Festivals, World Championships and National Championships. Several sports, including basketball and table tennis are fully integrated into the Class A NGB (National Governing Body within the United States Olympic Committee). The United States Disabled Sports Team, which participated in the 1996 Paralympics in Atlanta, was funded entirely by the U.S.O.C. The highlight of the opening ceremonies was Mark Wellman (a paraplegic rock climber) lighting the paralympic torch.

Participation in sports and recreation activities for persons with disabilities is readily available to men, women, and children. In addition, it is important to note that many individuals, who do not need to use a wheelchair for daily living, but still cannot participate or compete actively in sports due to physical limitations, are eligible for wheelchair sports.

Today, with only minimal regard to severity of mobility impairment, persons with disabilities may take part in various sports and recreational opportunities at whatever level they choose, be it for recreation or competition. Certainly the severity of disability will impose limits on the types of sports and recreation suitable for a person to pursue, but so will availability of barrier-free facilities and other pertinent resources in a given community.

### **Safety**

The most important thing to remember at all times is **safety**. This includes the setting in which you are pursuing an activity, the actual methods you are using to perform the activity, precaution against injury (blisters, abrasions, cuts, pressure sores, etc.), and the proven safety standard and required specifications of the equipment you are using. Of course your safety awareness and precautions must also extend to your regard for your fellow athletes and officials, as well as observers - whether or not they happen to have disabilities.

Sports and recreational opportunities for persons with disabilities have always been pursued with high safety practices in mind - with regard to conditioning and training, learning, recreational participation, competition, rules and regulations, and the development and regulation of sports wheelchairs and other equipment.

### **TYPES OF SPORTS AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

The list of activities that have been adapted for persons with disabilities now numbers more than fifty. There is considerable diversification, including options available to high quadriplegics. At present, the list includes:

All Terrain Vehicles	Long Distance Road Racing
Archery	Martial Arts
Basketball	Motor or Power Boating
Biking	Motorcycling
Billiards	Motor Soccer
Bowling	Paddle Boating
Camping	Parachuting
Canoeing	Pentathlon
Coastal Cruising	Pool
Cross-Country Sled-Skiing	Pulk Skiing
Dancing	Quad Rugby
Downhill Sled Skiing	Racquetball
Fencing	Rowing
Field Events -	Sailing
Club Throw	Scuba Diving
Discus	Skydiving
Javelin	Slalom
Shot-put	Sledge Hockey
Fishing	Snooker
Flying	Snowmobile
Football	Softball
Gardening	Square Dancing
Golf	Swimming
Gymnastics	Table Tennis
Hand Cycling	Tennis
Horseback Riding	Track/Road Racing
Horseshoes	Volleyball

Hunting  
Kayaking  
Lawn Bowls

Water Skiing  
Weightlifting  
Yachting

## **Physical Fitness**

Whether you decide to pursue sports activities as a recreational outlet or to be competitive, the most important benefit will be your improved physical and mental well-being. All people need some exercise to stay healthy but it is even more important for people with disabilities - participation in sports provides a pleasant way to do this. The physical activity you perform will improve your blood circulation and respiratory function. You will also find yourself drinking more fluids that will help prevent kidney and bladder infections. You will increase your strength, especially in your upper extremities, and become very proficient at handling a wheelchair that will help in overcoming everyday physical barriers. Your newly acquired physical fitness will almost naturally make you feel better about yourself and your capabilities - in turn; your frame of mind and outlook on life will improve. Another side-benefit will be increased opportunity for socialization, often among individuals with interests similar to your own.

If you have any interest at all in participating in sports and recreational activities, there have got to be a couple of things which have particular appeal and would be suitable given your level of functional ability.

One way to learn about sports and recreation opportunities is to subscribe to:  
Sports 'N Spokes  
Paralyzed Veteran of America  
Sports 'N Spokes/PN/Paraplegia News  
211 E. Highland Avenue, Suite 180  
Phoenix, AZ 85016-9611

Also, area Rehab Hospitals (Gaylord and Hospital for Special Care) have a Therapeutic Recreation Department that has an extensive listing of sports and recreational activities. Included are clinics in Golf, Tennis, Archery, Golf and Ski Clubs. Discovery Nights are held on a regular basis to introduce people to activities for those with disabilities, including equipment adaptation. Other activities include Creative Expressions and studio arts, T'ai Chi, pottery, basketry and creative writing. The TR services also sponsors the Connecticut Jammers quad rugby team and the "Little GHO" ( Gaylord Hospital Open ), a golf tournament for those with disabilities during the second week in June. Booklets are available that detail recreational activities in each county of Connecticut. A sports award banquet is held during the second week in May, including the awarding of the Challenger Award to individuals who personify the meaning of athletic competition and/or contribute to sports for those with disabilities. The Sports Association/Gaylord Hospital is franchised through the Disabled Sports/USA Association.

For further information, contact:  
Therapeutic Recreation

Gaylord Hospital  
100 Gaylord Farms Road  
Wallingford, CT 06492  
HOTLINE (800) 64-REHAB x3319

Ann Thompson  
Hospital for Special Care  
2150 Corbin Ave  
New Britain, CT 06053

## **ATHLETICS**

Wheelchair Sports, USA (W.S.U.S.A.) grew out of the original wheelchair competition conducted at Adelphi College in 1957. W.S.U.S.A. has grown by leaps and bounds since then and offers regional, national, and international competition in the following sports: track and field (including long distance racing), archery, shooting, swimming, weightlifting, basketball, quad rugby, tennis, table tennis, and fencing. All competitions are conducted according to the athlete's degree of disability. Each sport has developed a classification system permitting a high degree of equality for all athletes participating.

Regional meets are held annually throughout the U.S. for all sports. Athletes who have qualifying standards are eligible to compete at the nation games. In addition, international competitions are held yearly and the national teams are selected based on criteria established within each sport.

To become involved in sports for the disabled there is membership fee. For more information please contact:

Wheelchair Sports, U.S.A.  
3595 E. Fountain Blvd., Suite L-1  
Colorado Springs, CO 80910  
719-574-1150/574-9840 (Fax)

## **ARCHERY**

Lightweight adult bows for persons with disabilities as well as equipment supplies are available for individuals with disabilities. For further information on recreational and competitive opportunities in the sport of Archery contact:

Wheelchair Archery, USA  
C/O Wheelchair Sports, USA  
3595 E. Fountain Blvd., Suite L-1  
Colorado Springs, CO 80910  
719-574-1150/574-9840 (Fax)

## **BASKETBALL**

The National Wheelchair Association (NWBA) founded in 1949 presently boast a membership of 120 teams in 22 conferences. It is a voluntary, non-profit organization that seek to provide opportunities for team and individuals to engage in structured and nationally organized competition.

Among the services offered by the NWBA to its member teams through the Office of the Commissioner are: printing of an annual directory and rules book, weekly publication of a newsletter and standings and statistics report and furnishing of all forms necessary for reporting games and registering players, teams and officials. For further information on local teams or guidelines of the NWBA contact:

National Wheelchair Basketball Association  
Charlotte Institute for Rehabilitation  
1100 Blythe Rd.  
Charlotte, NC 28203  
704-355-1064/446-4999(Fax)

## **HAND CYCLING**

Hand cycling is a great alternative for aerobic conditioning and hand cyclists are now being allowed to participate in local road races. Most of the major wheelchair manufactures now sell hand cycles. For further information please contact:

American Hand Cycle Association  
1744 Pepper Villa Dr.  
El Cajon, CA 92021-1214  
619-644-2666

## **KAYAKING/CANOEING**

Kayaking and canoeing are available to individual with disabilities. It may require adapted equipment and/or seating devices and instructions in technique is recommended. There are several organization providing opportunities for paddling instructions and trips:

Nantahala Outdoor Center  
U.S. 19W, Box 41  
Bryson City, NC 28713  
(704) 488-2175

American Canoe Association  
7432 Alban Station Blvd., Suite B-226  
Springfield, VA 22150  
(703) 451-0141 FAX: (703) 451-2245

## **LONG DISTANCE ROAD RACING**

Wheelchair athletes now participate in the majority of marathons held throughout the world. In addition, the marathon is an official event of the Paralympics.

For further information contact:

Wheelchair Sports, USA  
3595 E. Fountain Blvd., Suite L-1  
Colorado Springs, CO 80910  
(719) 574-1150 FAX:(719) 574-9840

Wheelchair Athletics of the USA  
2351 Parkwood Rd.  
Snellville, GA 30278  
(770) 972-0763 FAX:(770) 985-4885

Long Distance Road Racing Chairperson                      E-mail: tforan@aol.com  
Tom Foran - Telephone (860) 683-4950 ext.3003      Fax: (860) 683-4956

## **MOTORCYCLING**

Trailblazing your interest? Snow, sand, mud, or rocky trails are no problem to members of the National Handicap Motorcyclist Association. For more information, contact:

National Handicap Motorcyclist Association  
315 West 21st St., Suite 6F  
New York, NY 10011  
(212) 242-3376

## **SWIMMING**

Interested in learning to swim or to get involved in competition? Contact your local YMCA or YWCA, the U.S. Swimming Local Swim Club, the Adapted P.E. department at a local university or your area rehabilitation hospital. Individuals of all disabilities can learn how to swim and compete.

For more information contact:

United State Wheelchair Swimming  
C/O Wheelchair Sports, USA  
3595 E. Fountain Blvd., Suite L-1  
Colorado Springs, CO 80910  
719-574-1150 FAX:574-9840

United States Swimming  
One Olympic Plaza  
Colorado Springs, CO 80909-5770  
(719) 578-4578 FAX: (719 ) 578-4669

## **PADDLE BOATING**

The Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center in Fisherville, Virginia has paddle boats with hand controls for clients. Call their Recreation Department at (540) 332-7185.

## PILOTING

Hand controls and a fold away boarding seat now enable pilots with disabilities to fly airplanes and ultralights. For further information, contact the following organizations.

Wheelchair Pilots Association  
C/O Arnold Allen  
2252 Barbara Dr.  
Clearwater, FL 33546  
813-535-1153

Union Aviation, Inc.  
C/O Leroy Laneve  
PO Box 207  
Sturgis, KY 42459  
502-333-5918

The Soaring Society of America, Inc.  
C/O Perry Fraser  
1712 Dilworth Road East  
Charlotte, NC  
704-376-9360

California Wheelchair Aviators  
C/O Bill Blackwood  
1117 Rising Hill Way  
Escondido, CA  
619-746-8761

## RUGBY

US Quad Rugby Association  
2418 West Fallcreek Court  
Grand Forks, ND 58201  
701-772-1961

The Connecticut Jammers  
Quad Rugby  
Gaylord Hospital  
Gaylord Farms Rd.  
Recreation Department  
Wallingford, CT 06492  
203-284-2800 x2732

## SAILING

There is probably no more liberating experience than being at the tiller of a sailboat with a cool summer breeze propelling you effortlessly along. Here are adapted sailing programs that are available in Connecticut, New York and Rhode Island.

A new group of sailing enthusiasts from neighboring states - some have disabilities and some do not - all of whom are committed to providing a chance for people with disabilities, their families and friends an opportunity to go sailing on Long Island Sound and other ocean fronts. The program is modeled after the shake-a-leg program in Newport and is in operation. For more information contact:

Donna DeMurest  
Sail Connecticut Access Program, Inc.  
14 Edge Rd.  
Watertown, CT 06795  
860-274-8745

Hugh Fletcher  
SeaLegs -  
The Handicap Sailing  
Experience, Inc.  
PO Box 2011  
New York, NY 10159-2011

212-645-SAIL

[HTTP://WWW.GORP.COM/NONPROF/SEALEGS.COM](http://www.gorp.com/nonprof/sealegs.com)

### **SHAKE-A-LEG**

Shake-A-Leg is a non-profit organization that offers second stage therapeutic rehabilitation and recreation programs for persons with physical disabilities seeking self-improvement, which includes sailing. Shake-A-Leg offers beginners sailing lessons at Sail Newport Sailing Center at Fort Adams Park from May through September. Shake-A-Leg's sailing lessons provide novice sailors with a disability sufficient sailboats that are especially designed for adapted sailing. For more information contact Shake-A-Leg for specific dates to reserve sailboats and other details on the program.

Shake-A-Leg  
200 Harrison Ave.  
Newport, RI 02840  
401-849-8898

### **SCUBA DIVING**

*Scuba Diving With Disabilities*, J. Robinson and A.D. Fox, Human Kinetics Publishers, Box 5076, Champaign, IL 61820, 800-DIAL-HKLP; 1986, 144 pages, \$16.00.

*Scuba Quarterly Undersea International Digest (SQUID)*, published by the Handicapped Scuba Association, \$18.00/year.

Handicapped Scuba Association  
1104 El Prado  
San Clemente, CA 92672  
714-498-6128  
[HTTP://ourworld.CompuServe.com/homepages/HSAHDQ](http://ourworld.CompuServe.com/homepages/HSAHDQ)

Moray Wheels  
Adaptive Scuba Association  
PO Box 1660 GMF  
Boston, MA 02205  
For More Information: 212-727-2118

### **SKY DIVING**

The Connecticut Parachutist in Ellington, CT has Skydiving activities to include people with disabilities. Eligible participants must meet requirements by the Connecticut Parachutists Committee.

For Further Information:  
Connecticut Parachutists Inc.  
PO Box 507, Ellington, CT 06029  
860-871-0021

### **SLED SKIING & MONO-SKIING**

One of the newest sports for a person who is paraplegic is downhill skiing using specially designed sleds and mono-skis.

Courage Center  
3915 Golden Valley Rd.  
Golden Valley, MN 55422  
612-588-0811

Courses in downhill sled skiing are available at:

Gaylord Hospital  
Gaylord Farms Rd.  
Wallingford, CT 06492  
Recreation Department 203-284-2800 x2732

### **SOFTBALL**

Wheelchair softball is off and running. The rules have been very slightly changed to accommodate athletes who use wheelchairs. If you are interested in a tournament, or would like a copy of the rules, contact:

National Wheelchair Softball Association  
Jon Speake, Commissioner  
1616 Todd Court  
Hastings, MN 55033  
612-437-1792

### **SQUARE DANCING**

Square dancing is the least expensive undertaking of the more popular activities. Dancers just come as they are. There are neither certified officials to pay, nor uniforms to purchase. Only nine prime elements are required for a square dance program-eight dancers and one caller. Callers can be solicited through local square dance or folk dance clubs or often through physical education or dance departments of elementary schools, secondary schools, or colleges. Any caller worth his/her microphone will have a good repertoire of figure types and pattern calls which he or she will find most appropriate for rolling hoe downers.

Square dancers that use wheelchairs can execute any dance and most fundamental moves. While the individual in a wheelchair may move as fast or faster than his or her counterpart, more

measures of music are generally required for a given distance. The bulk of the wheelchair and the more complicated maneuvers are aspects of this dancing that must be accounted for.

For more information: 602-224-0500 or

For a discussion and explanation of basic square dancing maneuvers and how to start a club, obtain a print of *Square Dancing on Wheels*, by Robert Szyman, from *Sports 'N Spokes*, 5201 North 19th Avenue, Suite 111, Phoenix, Arizona 85015.

The cost is \$1.00

## **TENNIS & RACQUET SPORTS**

Tennis enables people with disabilities to compete in an athletic sport with friends who may or may not have disabilities. A series of how-to articles on wheelchair tennis has been published by *Sports 'N Spokes* beginning with the September/October 1980 issue. A Directory of Tennis Programs for the Disabled is available from the US Tennis Association, Inc., Education and Research Center, 729 Alexander Road, Pricetown, NJ 08540, 609-452-2580. Additional information on wheelchair tennis may be obtained from:

National Foundation of Wheelchair Tennis  
940 Calle Amancer, Suite B  
San Clemente, CA 92673  
714-361-3663

International Foundation for Wheelchair Tennis  
Peter Burwash  
2203 Timberloch Place, Suite 126  
The Woodlands, TX 77380  
713-363-4707

Wheelchair Sports USA  
3595 E. Fountain Blvd. #11  
Colorado Springs, CO 80910  
719-574-1150

## **TRACK AND FIELD**

Numerous types of track and field events have been adapted for athletes who have disabilities including many opportunities for competitive participation. For more information:

National Wheelchair Athletic Association  
1604 East Pikes Peak Avenue  
Colorado Springs, CO 80909

719-635-9300

## VOLLEYBALL

Persons interested in playing volleyball from a wheelchair may obtain a *Sports 'N Spokes* reprint of "Volleyball" by Dennis Cherenko, which provides a history of the Canadian sport with basic rules (\$1.00)

## WILDERNESS PROGRAMS FOR PERSONS USING WHEELCHAIRS

Contact the following programs for more information about accessible wilderness programs:

Cooperative Wilderness  
Handicapped Outdoor Group  
Idaho State University  
Box 8118  
Pocatello, ID 83209  
208-236-39122

Courage Center  
3915 Golden Valley Rd.  
Golden Valley, MN 55422  
612-588-0811  
612-520-0473

National Sports Center for the Disabled  
Box 36  
Winter Park, CO 80482  
303-726-5514 ext.179

Recreational Challenges  
Box 442  
Pierce, ID 83546  
208-464-2118

Voyageur Outward Bound School  
10900 Cedar Lake Rd.  
Minnetonka, MN 55343  
800-328-2943

Wilderness Inquiry  
1313 Fifth St., SE Box 84  
Suite 117  
612-3779-3858

## CLASSIFICATIONS OF ATHLETES FOR FAIR COMPETITION

As the quantity and skill of athletes with disabilities have increased, so have the types, quantity, and caliber of competitive events. But in some events it would obviously be unfair for a low paraplegic to compete against a low quadriplegic... Thus, competition in National Wheelchair Athletic Association (NWM) events are regulated by a national classification system devised according to the extent of functional ability, ranging from high quadriplegics in class IA to low paraplegics in class V. These classifications apply to both men and women.

**Class IA:** All cervical lesions with complete or incomplete quadriplegia who have involvement of both hands, weakness of triceps (up to and including grade 3 on testing scale) and with severe weakness of the trunk and lower extremities interfering significantly with trunk balance and the ability to walk.

**Class IB:** All cervical lesions with complete or incomplete quadriplegia who have involvement of upper extremities but less than IA with preservation of normal or good triceps (4 or 5 on testing scale) and with a generalized weakness of the trunk and lower extremities interfering significantly with trunk balance and the ability to walk.

**Class IC:** All cervical lesions with complete or incomplete quadriplegia who have involvement of upper extremities but less than IB with preservation of normal or good triceps (4 or 5 on testing scale) and normal or good finger flexion and extension (grasp and release) but without intrinsic hand function and with a generalized weakness of the trunk and lower extremities interfering significantly with trunk balance and the ability to walk.

**Class II:** Complete or incomplete paraplegia below T1 down to T5 or comparable disability with total abdominal paralysis or poor abdominal muscle strength (0-2 on testing scale) and no useful trunk sitting balance.

**Class III:** Complete or incomplete paraplegia below T5 down to and including T10 with upper abdominal and spinal extensor muscular sufficient to provide some element of trunk sitting balance but not normal.

**Class IV:** Complete or incomplete paraplegia or comparable disability below T10 down to and including L2 without quadriceps or very weak quadriceps with a value up to and including 2 on the testing scale and gluteal paralysis.

**Class V:** Complete or incomplete paraplegia or comparable disability below L2 down to and including L4 with quadriceps in grade 3-5 (up to and including 39 points on the points scale).

**Class VI:** Complete or incomplete paraplegia or comparable disability below L4 down to and including S5 (40 points and above).

There are also differentiated classifications for amputees. The unilateral amputee, whether above the knee or below the knee, will be classification according to class VI defined immediately above. Bilateral amputees will be classified as follows:

**Class IV:** Bilateral above knee

**Class V:** Above knee/below knee

**Class VI:** Bilateral below knee

These classification systems are not used in every sporting and recreational competition for persons with disabilities. For example, archery is open competition and weight lifting is open competition for men.

## **SPORTS WHEELCHAIRS**

Wheelchairs used in sports have certain specifications, which vary from sport to sport. One of the major reasons for using an appropriate wheelchair for whatever sport you are pursuing is safety - your own as well as others. If you are competing, another reason is fairness of competition, which is regulated by certain required specifications, established by the governing body, which oversees the sport.

Like everyday wheelchairs, sports chairs are “fitted” to the individual. The market for sports wheelchairs has grown with the development of the overall sports and recreation movement. The expanding market has increased competition among manufacturers. This has led to innovation and also involving wheelchair and other sports-related equipment.

Check with other people involved with the sports you are interested in, to help locate the best equipment for that sport. Or, to see generally what is on the market contact local dealers or have a search done on ABLE DATA. (see chapter 6)

### **HEMLOCK OUTDOOR EDUCATION CENTER**

Hemlocks, located southeast of Hartford, is a year-round facility serving people with disabilities of all ages, their families, and professionals. Owned and operated by the Connecticut Easter Seals Society, Hemlocks provides a wide range of direct and indirect programming of a recreational, rehabilitative and educational nature. Their facilities, completed in 1974, are of barrier free design providing an environment, which allows persons of all disabilities optimal independence of movement.

Programs at Hemlock are similar to those found at camps for people without disabilities. However, activities are adapted to the ability levels of the campers. These activities include swimming, crafts, nature lore, boating, fishing, sports and games, sleep outs, snow sculpting and skating are favorite winter activities. During the summer there are five 11-13 day sessions for people with disabilities (ages 5 to 80) beginning in mid June and ending in late August. In the fall, winter and spring, three types of three-day residential weekends for people with disabilities are offered; “Recreation-social” for children, teens, and adults; “Buddy” for persons who have disabilities and non-disabled friends; and “Family” a person with a disability and their family.

Facilities include a fully winterized core building featuring semi-private and dorms style housing units, an indoor heated swimming pool, meeting and conference rooms, dining room and snack bar, infirmary and wings for indoor recreation. A large open-air pavilion serves as the focus for outdoor living activities. Other buildings in this area include heated lodges serving 25 persons each and cabins designed for arts and crafts and other outdoor education programming. This 166-acre Center includes paved natural trails and 22-acre lake especially well suited for boating and fishing activities. Docks, designed for use by people with disabilities, offer easy access to water. An adapted 28-passenger bus with a lift provides transportation for outdoor education, residential weekend and recreation/social groups as required.

The professional staff includes persons with training in therapeutic recreation, camping outdoor and special education. Paid counselors, volunteers and student interns complete the

professional staff for summer camp and residential weekend programs. The Center's physician is on 24-hour call and a registered nurse lives on the premises.

Referrals are accepted from people with disabilities and from any agency or individual engaged in the welfare of people with disabilities. Rules for acceptance vary with specific programs, but no one is denied participation due to race, color, national origins or financial status. Behaviorally disordered or medically needy individuals cannot be served, however. Fees are based on an ability to pay basis with camper ship availability dependent upon donor contributions.

Program Coordinator  
Hemlocks Outdoor Education Center  
Jones Street  
Hebron, CT 06231  
860-228-9496

### **OTHER RESOURCES & SPORTS PROGRAMS**

Connecticut Special Olympics  
860-242-2918

Connecticut Children's Medical Center  
282 Washington Street  
Hartford, CT 06106  
860-545-9880  
Recreation Department

United Cerebral Palsy of Hartford  
80 Whitney Avenue  
Hartford, CT 06105  
860-236-6201