

ParaSport[®]

MAGAZINE

WINTER 2019



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*Durham Region 2019
Ontario Parasport Games*

Sitting Volleyball

Serving Up a Sport for All

Pioneering Women's

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WELCOME

Welcome to the new *ParaSport® Magazine*, and the new ParaSport® Ontario (PO) in fact. So, what's new at PO?" Much has changed over the last year, but what has always been best about PO remains the same. This I know first-hand.



Forty years ago I was active in a lot of sports. Then I sustained a traumatic injury and didn't think that there was anything I'd be able to play as a kid without any hands.

ParaSport Ontario – which was Sport for Disabled Ontario at the time – found me, advocated for me, connected me with a local parasport club, and supported me on my parasport path... which ultimately guided me to the medal podium at three Paralympic Games.

We still do that... and much more. Parasport pathways are different for each one of us. ParaSport Ontario supports all members of the disability community in finding their sport or activity of choice. We believe that there is a sport for everyBODY!"

From our TRY Me parasport posters and postcards, and demonstrations at schools, conferences, trade shows, community events and rehab facilities, to our Equipment Rental program that gives parasport enthusiasts a "test-drive" we're very busy encouraging participation and inclusion.

We connect participants and athletes across the province with clubs and programs and organizations in the sport of their choice. Our 1,000 Years of ParaSport Advisory Team answers questions of any kind related to getting involved in adapted recreation or sport. And we bring parasport news and inspiration to Ontario's disability community every day.

We are working to make Ontario's disability community more active and healthy, which comes with greater independence, quality of life, friendships, fun and more.

If you need a nudge, a suggestion, or more information, ParaSport Ontario is here to get you started! This issue of *ParaSport Magazine* only scratches the surface of adapted sport and recreation choices. There's a sport for everyBODY!

Attain it. Sustain it.

Jeff Tiessen,
Executive Director

PS: If you picked this issue up in a clinic or at an event, or wherever, and would like to get on our mailing list simply sign up as a Member of the ParaSport Ontario Family, and we'll keep them coming to you, along with monthly e-newsletters and much more. And it's FREE. Join us at www.parasportontario.ca.

ParaSport® MAGAZINE

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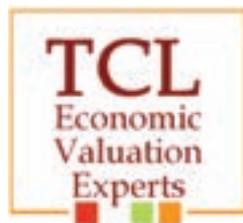


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TRY ME SESSIONS AND EQUIPMENT RENTAL



Photo by: Brian Summers

TRY Me is an outreach program developed under the light of ParaSport® Ontario's Ready, Willing and Able program. TRY Me offers unique sport demonstration sessions and an equipment rental program for schools, community and corporate events, and personal use. ParaSport Ontario (PO) demonstrations and equipment encourage participation in adapted sport and recreation to help guide Ontarians on their lifelong path of healthy, active living.

TRY Me sessions are demonstration events that showcase a multitude of accessible sports and activities. TRY Me sessions connect sport leaders with Ontarians with disabilities and are an impactful way to expose Ontarians with disabilities to adapted sport and active living opportunities of their choice.

PO programs are delivered to a vast array of venues and events including elementary, secondary and postsecondary schools, camps, and community and corporate events. PO works with hosts to plan and develop unique programs catered to their objectives and audiences.

ParaSport Ontario also has adaptive sport-specific equipment available for loan. Adapted equipment representing over 10 different parasports is available for rent to individuals, families, schools, events, community programs, clubs, rehabilitation centers and disability service organizations.

Visit www.parasportontario.ca for more information, rental inquiries and reservations. Fill out an inquiry form about your event and talk to someone in our office about hosting your TRY Me event.

2018 VARIETY HEART AWARD

Tracy Schmitt is a motivational speaker, bestselling author, teacher, world traveler, adventurer, mountain climber, sailor, scuba diver and decorated athlete/alumni of Variety Village and now, the recipient of the 2018 Variety Heart Award. A four-way amputee, "Unstoppable Tracy" is also an advisor on ParaSport® Ontario's 1,000 Years of Parasport Advisory Team. Her work to break down barriers and challenge the way people view disability, and their own lives, has paved the way for many others in their pursuit of sport, recreation and excellence.



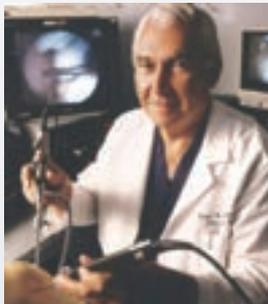
Photo by: Brenda Spielmann



DR. ROBERT W. JACKSON AWARD OF DISTINCTION

Bernard Gluckstein, Q.C., and his firm Gluckstein Personal Injury Lawyers, have been passionate advocates for parasports for not only their clients but the disability community in general. Gluckstein has been a driving force behind ParaSport® Ontario's growth for many years. As part of the Para Pro Am Golf Tournament this year, Gluckstein was honoured with the Dr. Robert W. Jackson Award of Distinction for his outstanding volunteer service and dedication.

A prestigious award, the late Dr. Jackson is known as the father of Paralympics in Canada. It was the 1960s and most Canadians didn't know very much about people with disabilities at all. But one man set out to change that. Dr. Jackson, a renowned orthopedic surgeon, knew what was possible when Canadians dare to dream and then work hard

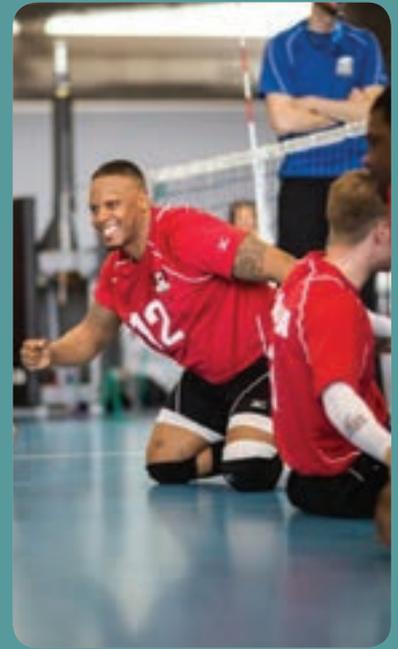


Dr. Robert W. Jackson

to make it happen. The Paralympics in Canada were born when Dr. Jackson organized our nation's first Paralympic team of athletes that competed at the 1968 games in Tel Aviv, Israel. Today, Canada is a Paralympic world leader.

Gluckstein is a most fitting recipient of the Dr.

Robert W. Jackson Award of Distinction for his vision and dedication to the power of sport for all Ontarians. A celebrated personal injury lawyer and Canadian Disability Hall of Fame inductee, Gluckstein has worked tirelessly to advance the causes of Ontarians with disabilities, particularly those with acquired brain injury and those with spinal cord injury as well. In addition, he has combined his love of photography with his desire to support the Paralympic Movement as an accredited photographer at numerous Paralympic Games.



Ambassador of the Year Award

The athlete ambassadors who represent ParaSport® Ontario, and parasports in general, contribute immeasurably to the mission of ensuring that there is a sport or active living opportunity for everyBODY. One member of the ambassador team who has truly represented this cause is Jamoi Anderson, who untiringly dedicates himself to not only being a member of the Men's National Sitting Volleyball Team, but to countless events as a ParaSport Ontario ambassador. He represents his sport and others, and shares his dreams, vision and personal story with countless hundreds of youth and adults each year.

Community NEWS

PLAY FINDS A WAY

***“Play is about more than getting active;
it’s about helping kids reach their full potential.”***



Canadian Tire Jumpstart has announced a five-year, \$50 million commitment to support community partners in providing play for kids of all abilities. Part of this plan involves helping to offset the costs associated with building inclusive infrastructure and programming.

Jumpstart has started construction on creating large-scale, accessible playgrounds in every province and territory across Canada, hoping to set the standard for an inclusive model of play and bringing kids of all abilities the magic of play side-by-side.

Each playground will be created with a universal design that provides a sensory-rich environment for kids to promote physical, social and emotional development. Some features of the inclusive playground include double-wide ramps, roller ramps and bucket seat with harness swings.

ONTARIO TRACK AND FIELD AWARD WINNERS

Athletics Ontario hosted the 2018 Awards Gala and Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony in September in Toronto. Athletics Ontario’s All-Ontario program recognizes important members of the athletics community including top male and female Para-Athletes of the Year. Congratulations to the award winners: Keegan Gaunt (Female Para Track), Joshua Cassidy (Male Para Track), Kevin Strybosch (Male Para Field) and Pamela Lejean (Female Para Field).



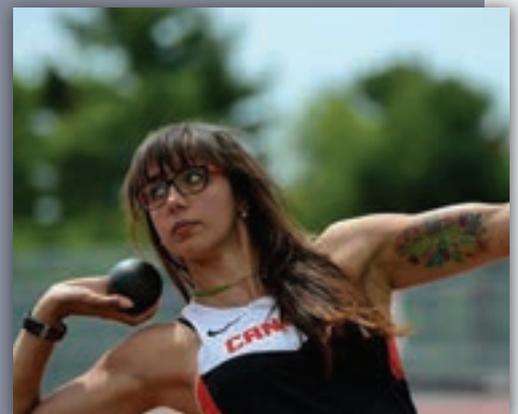
Keegan Gaunt



Joshua Cassidy



Kevin Strybosch



Pamela Lejean



GREAT OUTDOORS IS OPEN TO ALL

WindReach Farm officially opened its doors in 1989. Specially-designed to meet the needs of individuals with a variety of disabilities, WindReach Farm includes fully wheelchair accessible pathways, trails, buildings, barns and stables.

Offering a range of programs and built on the foundation of inclusiveness, WindReach Farm welcomes the able-bodied community as well. But its programs and services have been developed with full accessibility at the forefront. Situated on 105 acres of land provides a unique environment allowing the programs to combine both a natural farm with an assortment of animals that provide their own form of 'therapy' to their clients. The farm offers learning and experiential opportunities with the goal of engaging clients to strengthen skills, independence, and physical well-being in a safe and nurturing environment.

WindReach Farm's *Get Outside! Adaptive Sport and Recreation* program has partnered with the Shelley Gautier Parasport Foundation and

Abilities in Motion to offer unique year-round sport opportunities that are specifically focused on getting people active in the great outdoors. The program offers unique opportunities to participate in a variety of activities such as tandem cycling, archery and paddling.

With different community partners loaning specialized equipment, the Get Outside! program has been able to expand programming considerably since its start in the summer of 2017. New additions in 2018 include paddling and wilderness skills sessions, which cover topics like orienteering, fire-building, hiking, and survival skills. The program, which welcomes people of all ages, and has worked with a variety of organizations such as CNIB, Community Living, the Alzheimer's Society and Special Olympics, is made possible through funding from the Ontario Sport and Recreation Communities Fund. Visit WindReach Farm's website at www.windreachfarm.org to learn more about this exciting program. Get in touch and Get Outside!

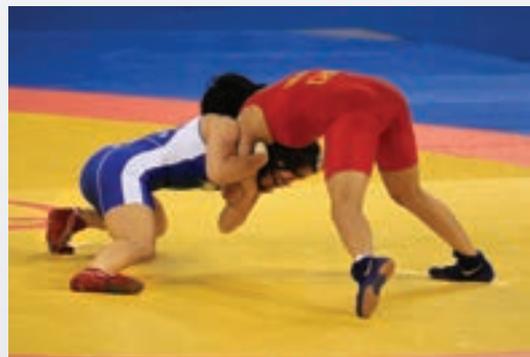
KAREN O'NEILL Named Sports Executive of the Year

Sports Media Canada announced its honourees for the 2018 Achievement Awards in September which included Karen O'Neill, CEO of the Canadian Paralympic Committee, as Sports Executive of the Year.



During the 2018 Paralympic Winter Games in Pyeong-Chang, South Korea, Canada enjoyed its best-ever medaling year to date. The Ottawa-based Canadian Paralympic Committee (CPC) works tirelessly to propel Paralympic sport, and the athletes who compete and fight for inclusion for all.

ParaSport® Ontario congratulates O'Neill for her excellent work at the helm of CPC, a position she has held since 2013, and the performances of the entire Paralympic team.



Ontario Blind Sports Association

Ontario Blind Sports Association plans, promotes, coordinates and sanctions events designed to assist the development of sport programs for athletes who are blind or visually impaired in Ontario. What kinds of sports do they offer? Many... goalball, athletics, judo, powerlifting, swimming, wrestling and 5-a-side soccer (a.k.a. "blind soccer").

PARALYMPIAN INDUCTED INTO CANADA'S SPORTS HALL OF FAME

A six-time Paralympian and six-time World Champion wheelchair racer, Jeff Adams has shown the world how to find opportunity in adversity. Born in Brampton, Ont., as an infant Adams underwent radiation therapy to treat cancer. These treatments saved his life but permanently damaged his spinal cord, and Adams began using a wheelchair at the age of nine.

An athletic child, his love for sport helped him overcome the challenges of adapting to life with a physical disability. Learning to use his wheelchair as a piece of athletic equipment, Adams quickly discovered new ways to fulfill his potential. Powered by determination, he quickly rose to elite levels of competition on the international wheelchair racing circuit. Between 1988 and 2008, he competed in six consecutive Paralympic Games, capturing an outstanding total of 13 medals. Highlighting his winning ways, at the Paralympic Games in 2000, Adams captured gold medals in both the 1500m and 800m races, silver in the 400m event, and bronze medals in both the 5000m race and 4x100 relay.

One of Canada's most successful Paralympic athletes, Adams's competitive achievements have inspired his equally dynamic brand of activism. Serving as a spokesperson, journalist and media commentator, he has often leveraged his athletic achievements to advocate for accessibility and lend support to organizations that promote equality for people with disabilities. Unafraid to put himself in the public eye for a good cause, at one point he climbed all 1,776 steps of the CN Tower in a specially-designed wheelchair to raise funds for accessibility awareness. Adams

has also served as Chair of the Accessibility Committee for the Toronto 2008 Olympic Bid Committee and Chair of the Ontarians with Disability Advisory Council.

Years of experience of contributing to innovative wheelchair design while competing on the international racing circuit have also helped

Adams find success in the world of business, where he has founded two wheelchair companies. His passion to realize life's possibilities when faced with adversity have helped transform the way people across Canada and around the world perceive adaptive sport disciplines and athletes with disabilities.



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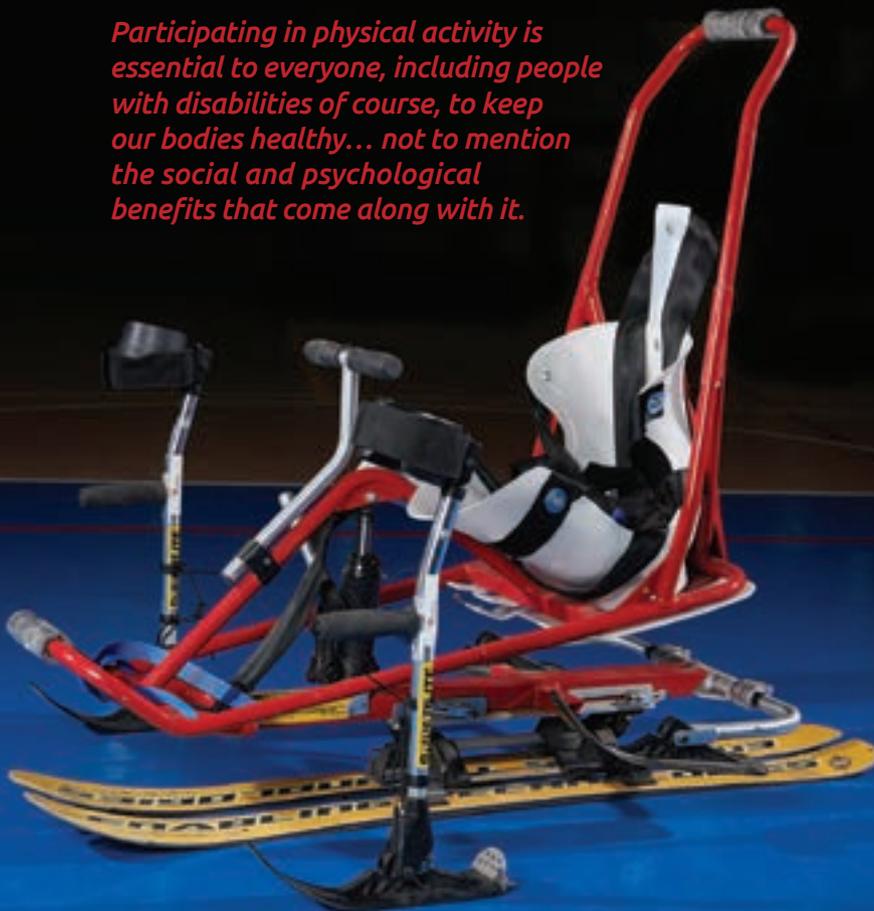
TRYme

You Might Like Me

The ParaSport® Ontario Postcard and Poster Series

By Vanessa Fragomeni

Participating in physical activity is essential to everyone, including people with disabilities of course, to keep our bodies healthy... not to mention the social and psychological benefits that come along with it.



Photos by: Brian Summers

Sports speak to us, and in the case of ParaSport® Ontario's "TRY Me" multi-sport postcards and posters, so does the adaptive equipment. These print materials are designed to start Ontarians with disabilities of any age on a path to participation in parasports.

A common challenge for people with disabilities is an unfamiliarity with the many different parasports that are available, or the parasport paths that exist. Or simply, despite an enthusiasm to try a sport, they just might not know which sport is best for them.

The TRY Me postcard and poster series is an effective resource to assist members of the disability community – youth and adult – as well as parents and practitioners with introductions to various parasports and the provincial sport organizations and clubs that provide adaptive sport opportunities both recreationally and competitively.

The TRY Me print package is a FREE resource, featuring 10 different parasports on posters and oversized postcards for give-away. The back of each postcard describes the sport and connects card recipients with the organization that represents that parasport.

Whether you want to play competitively or recreationally, there is a sport for everyBODY.

TRY ME Partners

Ontario Cycling Association
www.ontariocycling.org

Ontario Blind Sports Association
www.blindsports.on.ca

Ontario Track 3 Ski Association
www.track3.org

Ontario Volleyball Association
www.ontariovolleyball.org

Ontario Cerebral Palsy Sports Association
www.ocpsa.com

Cross Country Ski Ontario
www.xcskiontario.ca

Ontario Sledge Hockey Association
www.ontariosledge.com

Ontario Curling Council
www.ontariocurlingcouncil.com

Athletics Ontario
www.athleticsontario.ca



You can order your FREE TRY Me print package by filling out the TRY Me order form on our website under Programs.

Presented by ParaSport® Ontario's Founding 5 TRY ME Campaign Partners



TAKE A SEAT

Sitting Volleyball for All

By Joe Millage



Photo courtesy of Canadian Paralympic Committee

*Sinclair High School
represented by
two dozen students
at Fitness Friends
in Whitby*

It's tough when others don't get it. Wanting something so badly that it hurts, sacrificing time away from friends and family to get to practice and play, staying home on a Friday night to get enough rest for practice the next morning, turning down fun foods and drinks to follow a strict diet. Five days out of the week you're sweating it out at the gym, just to push yourself to go twice a day during an entire phase of training. You drink the pink. You sweat. You cry. Then, for a few glorious hours a week YOU GET TO PLAY WITH YOUR TEAM WHO UNDERSTAND AND LIVE IN THE SAME WORLD YOU DO.



This summer I spent a few hours with a very unique team. They were agile and strong as they gracefully bumped and set and powerfully smashed the ball over the net to a team on the other side that did the same. When the ball hit the floor, their coach served another and the sequence continued without missing a beat.

After the play stopped the teams quickly moved to serve or receive the serve, gliding quickly into position, hips in constant contact with the floor. That's right – with their hips never leaving the floor.

I was at the Toronto Pan-Am Sport Centre with the National Women's Sitting Volleyball Team as they prepared for an international tournament in the Netherlands. Of the nine players on the roster, eight were amputees. But the stories of how they found their sport were all very different.



Albertan JENNIFER OAKES had her leg amputated after a boating accident. Oakes, a second-year human kinetics major, plays libero for the No. 1-ranked University of British Columbia Okanagan Heat women's volleyball team and is one of the key players on the Canadian Women's Sitting Volleyball Team. Just a month after her accident, a member of Canada's sitting volleyball team reached out to her. They talked about life and sport. From there, her curiosity for sitting volleyball grew and in short time Oakes found herself training with the national team in preparation for the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games, where she ended up representing her country.



JOLAN WONG of Petawawa, Ont., and a ParaSport® Ontario Ambassador for that region and Ottawa, brings plenty of international experience to the women's sitting volleyball team. She was a member of Team Canada at the 2010 World Championships and the Toronto 2015 Parapan American Games where Canada won the bronze medal and earned its berth at the 2016 Paralympic Games in Rio. The Canadian Women's Sitting Volleyball Team made history in Rio as the first Canadian team (men's or women's) to compete in sitting volleyball at a Paralympic Games.

Wong lost a leg to bone cancer at age 13, but that didn't deter her from keeping active. She participated in numerous sports through high school, was a para-cyclist and played standing amputee hockey until she was 18, before switching to athletics. At age 14, she began a four-year standing volleyball career with J.R. Robson Marauders until she got involved with sitting volleyball.

The biggest challenge these days for the mother of two is raising her family with her husband while training, travelling and finding a balance between family and sport.

In February 2019, Durham Region will host the next Ontario Parasport Games and seated volleyball will be a featured sport. Teams from Whitby's Sinclair High School, Toronto's Variety Village, the St. Catharines-based Niagara Penguins and the Grandview Children's Centre will be competing, many for the first time.

I am amazed at the passion of Sinclair teachers Catherine Kolesnik and Darrin Lee, therapists like Cathy Kelly from Grandview, and coaches like Karen Natho of the Penguins who, in a very short time, have opened doors so others can find their sport and get a chance to demonstrate their excellence.

Most recently the Aurora Sports Council expressed an interest in starting a program and ParaSport® Ontario (PO) is working with the Ontario Volleyball Association to grow the game across the province. PO has five Ambassadors who play for the National Team and each of them is ready, willing and enthusiastic about helping to create and develop new programs.



For clinic locations, dates and times contact the PO office at 416-426-7187 or visit www.parasportontario.ca.

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AS KIDS GROWING UP IN CANADA *many of us played hockey at one point or another. Whether it was in gym class, on a community team, or in the park or on a pond with our friends, it's the Canadian way. While most of us have had the chance to play the nation's official winter sport, some never did.*

Only three percent of youth with disabilities participate in physical activity. While some sports and recreational activities are available for children with physical disabilities, those with limited mobility or upper body strength have even less options. Furthermore, there are very few activities that give youth with severe

disabilities the chance to partake in a team-based sport independently. Volt Hockey is one of the activities that provides both the access and the independence.

Originating in Denmark, Volt Hockey is an adapted version of ice hockey that equalizes the playing field for children with disabilities. Played by over 50 teams throughout Denmark, Germany, Norway, Sweden and the United States, Volt Hockey has finally made its way to Canada! Working with the Royal Danish Consulate General in Toronto, Variety Village formed the first-ever Canadian Volt Hockey Team in 2016.

This para hockey sport consists of three players on each team on the court at one time, maneuvering a specialized electric wheelchair. The Danish-designed Hockey Sport Chair allows players with limited upper body movement to maneuver the machine using a joystick, offering them the ability to spin the chair 360 degrees and reach speeds of up to 13 km/h.





VOLT Hockey Scores BIG with Kids

By Issa Ocampo, Assistant, Communications & Fundraising, Variety Village

Unlike other para hockey sports such as sledge or leagues for visually impaired players, Volt gives individuals with very limited upper body mobility the ability to play Canada's favourite game on their own. Athletes with a variety of disabilities including muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy, spina bifida, osteoporosis and dwarfism have the chance to play the sport without any assistance from anyone – a first for many and a dream some kids never imagined could come true.

Take six-year-old Liam Marriage who has loved hockey since he was two years old, but was never able to play because of a condition called arthrogyrosis, which makes moving his joints difficult. He became accustomed to being the slowest kid in every group, but thanks to Volt he can go faster than he's ever gone before!

Zach, who is seven, has cerebral



palsy and uses an electric chair to get around. He has very limited mobility and usually requires assistance when playing sports like sledge hockey. Since the Volt Hockey chairs only require the ability to toggle a joystick, Zach finally has the chance to move, play and score goals all on his own!

Now that Volt has made its way to Ontario, the goal is to build a league of teams throughout the province. Currently, there is a team at Variety

Village, a Volt Hockey summer camp in Markham, a new team set to begin next March in London, and interest for teams in Barrie and Mississauga.

The more communities that Volt can expand into, the more kids, who thought they would never get a chance to play hockey, can participate. "I would never have imagined that I would be able to see my son play hockey," smiles parent Harjeet Sandhu.

"Seeing my son Bhavjeet play hockey has made my dreams come true too."

Variety – the Children's Charity of Ontario: In a world of differences, we make a world of difference. Support Variety Village – the sport, fitness, education and life skills facility where all abilities are welcome and anything is possible. To learn more or to make a donation, visit us at www.varietylvillage.ca.



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Games Co-Chair Emmy IHEME and Games Mascot PACHI couldn't be more excited to greet more than 500 participants from February 8 to 10, 2019.



PREPAR

Durham Region

"Athletes across the province are working hard to be at their very best when they come to compete, so you need to work hard and be at your very best too."

Those words of advice from Mike Frogley, a Durham resident and National Academy Director and Coach for Wheelchair Basketball Canada, inspired the volunteer organizing committee for the Durham Region 2019 Ontario Parasport Games as they prepare to host over 500 participants competing in 11 sports from February 8 to 10, 2019.

"We've taken Mike's words to heart," says Don Terry, 2019 Ontario Parasport Games Co-Chair. "They motivate us to leave no stone unturned in making these Games the best yet."

Durham Region boasts the accessible facilities that are essential to successfully host the Ontario Parasport Games. The Abilities Centre in Whitby, for instance, will serve as the headquarters, hosting the Opening Ceremonies and VIP Reception, as well as sitting volleyball and boccia competitions. Terry believes the event will not only be an economic boon for Durham Region, but will also shine a light on its inclusiveness.



Para-alpine



Para-Nordic



Sitting Volleyball



Sledge Hockey



Vision Impaired
Curling



Wheelchair
Basketball

ING TO BE THE BEST

2019 ONTARIO PARASPORT GAMES

“The Abilities Centre is a state-of-the-art facility that was built for people of all abilities,” enthuses Emmy Iheme, 2019 Ontario Parasport Games Co-Chair. “Its tagline is ‘You Belong Here’ and the athletes are going to feel right at home at the Abilities Centre and here in Durham Region.”

Other accessible venues and sports include: 5-a-side soccer at Pickering Soccer Centre, sledge hockey at Iroquois Park Sports Centre, wheelchair basketball at Durham College and the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, wheelchair rugby at Brooklin High School, para alpine skiing and para nordic skiing at Brimacombe ski resort, goalball at Donald A. Wilson Secondary School, and wheelchair curling and visually impaired curling at Oshawa Curling Club.

Students and interested residents had a chance to try some of these sports and meet athletes during the 100 Day Countdown event held at Pickering High School in November.

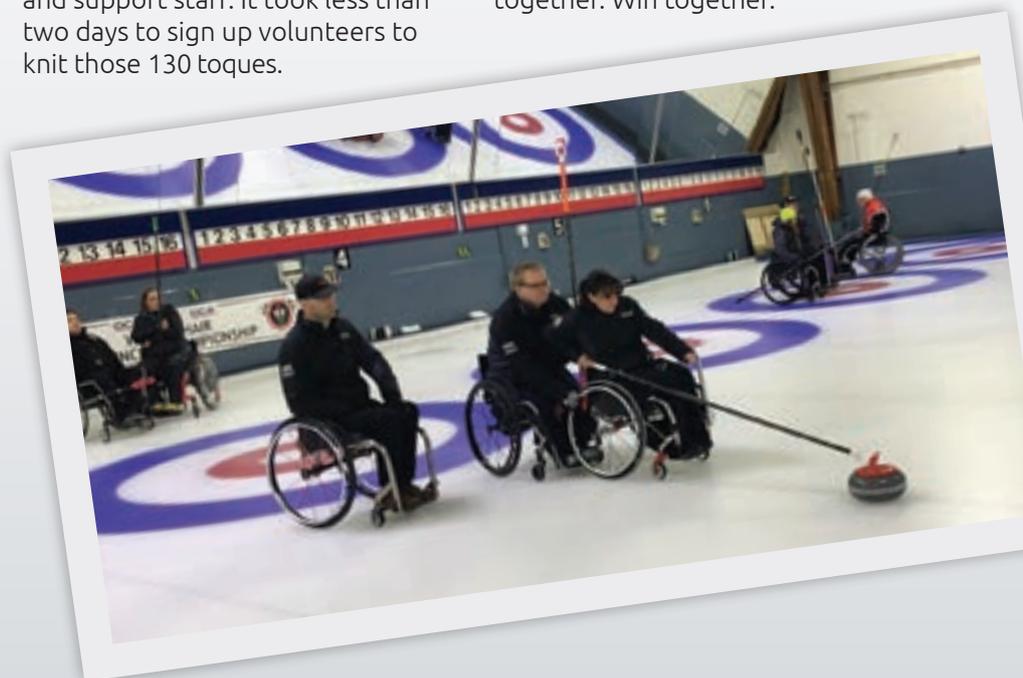
“Hosting the Ontario Parasport Games is an opportunity for Durham Region to demonstrate our value for accessibility and inclusion,” notes Lori Talling, Sport Tourism Coordinator at The Regional Municipality of Durham and Games Program Manager. “We’re

pleased but not surprised by the strong community support we’re receiving.”

The Games’ toque knitting initiative is a great example of that support. As part of a commitment to sustainability and delivering a memorable experience for the athletes, volunteers were sought to knit 400 toques as gifts. It took only 10 days to sign up enough volunteers. A decision was then made to knit toques for coaches, managers, and support staff. It took less than two days to sign up volunteers to knit those 130 toques.

“The toque knitting initiative also boosted our efforts to add as many people as we could to our Games team and raise awareness of the challenges and capabilities of the para athletes and others in our community,” explains Terry.

The Games organizers also launched a contest for residents and students in Durham Region to design the medals to be awarded. The winning design is unique and embraces the Games tagline of “Play together. Win together.”





“We’re also committed to helping grow parasport participation here in Durham and across the province.”

– Lori Talling

The organizing committee is also working with sports organizations, schools, service clubs, businesses, and cultural groups.

“We’re also committed to helping grow parasport participation here in Durham and across the province,” adds Talling. “An extensive school try-it program has been proposed and our Legacy Fund is another key initiative.” The proposed try-it program would include providing high schools with the equipment needed to offer a number of parasports, and training on how to integrate students of all abilities. Also proposed is an annual parasport festival where high school students of all abilities will compete together.

A partnership has been struck with Their Opportunity, a not-for-profit organization based in Durham Region, to manage the Games Legacy Fund following the 2019 Ontario Parasport Games. The fund will ensure that family financial

status is not a barrier for youth with disabilities wanting to participate in a parasport.

This is not the region’s first foray into hosting a provincial sports competition, as the 2000 Ontario Summer Games and 2010 Ontario 55+ Summer Games emanated from Durham. Several events were also held in Durham during the 2015 Parapan American Games.

Terry explains that while parasport athletes are proud competitors, the games are about much more than medals. “For me, I truly believe that when we all play, we win. Some of these athletes are exceptional at their individual sports but when you see the sheer joy on their faces, to me, that in a nutshell is what these games are all about. And hosting the Parasport Games will also help athletes in the future.”

The event is funded through a \$100,000 commitment from the Ontario government’s Ministry of



Tourism, Culture and Sport, \$20,000 from Durham Region and contributions from sponsors.

For more about the Durham Region 2019 Ontario Parasport Games visit www.durhamregion2019.ca and follow DurhamRegion19 on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.



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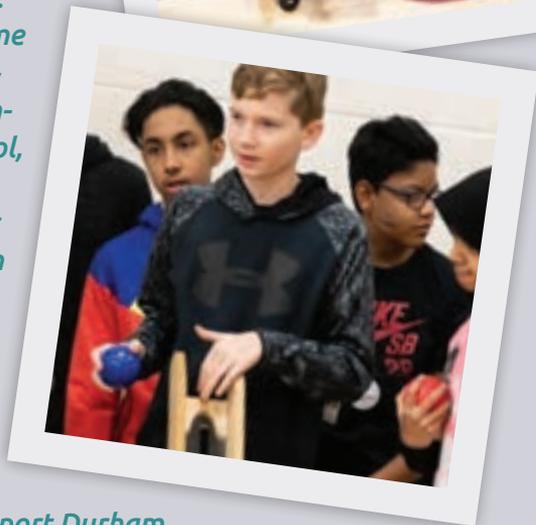
100 Day Countdown CELEBRATION

After working on these Games for two years, the organizing committee was excited to celebrate its

100 Day Countdown milestone on November 1, 2018. About 500 people joined the festivities and tried a number of different parasports, met athletes, watched the unveiling of the Games medal design, high-fived PACHI, and left excited about the 2019 Games.

The event was hosted by the Durham District School Board and Pickering High School. The students at the daytime sessions from Lincoln Avenue Public School, St. Francis De Sales Catholic School, Lincoln Alexander Public School, Eagle Ridge Public School, and Pickering High School couldn't have been more enthusiastic.

Partners from the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, The Regional Municipality of Durham, Sport Durham, Ontario Wheelchair Sports Association, ParaSport® Ontario, and the Abilities Centre contributed to the day's activities. Andrew Genge, who represented Canada (and Durham Region) at the last Paralympic Games as a Para Snowboardcross competitor, was on hand as a special guest. A gold medal-worthy celebration it was.



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ONTARIO BLIND SPORTS ASSOCIATION

The Ontario Blind Sports Association (OBSA) promotes and sanctions events and activities designed to assist the development of sports programs for blind/visually impaired athletes in Ontario

Programs and Activities

- OBSA Summer Sports Camp
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THE PENGUINS

Marching Towards More Milestones

As the BROCK NIAGARA PENGUINS enter their 13th year of serving the Niagara Peninsula, they are ready as ever to expand para-programming options in the Niagara region.

In 2006, a small group of people recognized the importance of starting a program for athletes with physical disabilities, where children and young adults could join a team, expand their physical literacy skills and have the opportunity to compete amongst their peers.

With welcoming arms from Brock Sports and the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences at Brock University and various grants, the Penguins were able to purchase sport wheelchairs, indoor sledges and a pool lift. The club quickly recognized the impor-

tance of ensuring that all athletes have access to the equipment necessary to participate, without having to purchase it themselves.

The Penguins started with a swim program, twice a week, with a small “siblings-included” sports program on the weekends. This venture swiftly evolved into a wheelchair basketball team. The wheelchair basketball team competes in Ontario Wheelchair Sports Association-hosted tournaments and hosts their own annual match every March. With 17 athletes currently on the roster, the team trains once a week and incorporates a house league game at every practice.

In 2013, the Penguins added a third sport to their programming portfolio to accommodate athletes

who were not able to propel themselves in a chair well enough to play basketball but still wanted to participate in sport and compete. In response, the parasport boccia program was developed in partnership with the Niagara Children’s Centre, which has culminated in a regional tournament each spring.

For the past two summers, a one-week parasport day camp has been hosted at Heartland Forest, an accessible venue in Niagara, where 12 junior athletes try different parasports, meet Paralympic and Olympic athletes and try new activities throughout the week. Volunteers from the Penguins have also assisted local high school wheelchair racers to learn and develop their racing techniques.





This fall the Penguins program expanded to its fourth sport. In partnership with the City of St. Catharines, the Brock Niagara Penguins started a sitting volleyball team. With two Try-It Nights in September and January, and practice every Monday night after that, the hope is to develop a team to compete at a future Ontario ParaSport® Games.

In the 2017-18 season, there were over 35 athletes in the five programs, ranging from six to 45 years of age. The Penguins have enjoyed watching several of their athletes rise to national heights... two nationally-identified boccia players, a wheelchair basketball player who joined the ranks of sledge hockey as well and played for Team Canada in Para Ice Hockey

winning Paralympic gold, an alumni athlete who is now on the Canadian women's Para Ice Hockey team, and a wheelchair racer who took the silver medal at OFSSA.

And yet, the Penguins are equally proud of the less lofty narratives it has helped create over the past 13 years. Penguins' athletes are delighted to wear their club shirts to school every Wednesday before boccia practice. There is great joy in cheering on athletes scoring their first basket in their first basketball tournament. And onlookers won't soon forget witnessing an athlete who was so excited when his teammate dove off the starting blocks and did a 25m front crawl, that he high-fived everyone on the sidelines at a local swim meet.

Each athlete has been a contrib-

uting member of their team and has developed skills in their respective sport while supporting the mission of the Penguins. But the Penguins is so much more than the athletes in the gym or pool, or on the track and court. It is all possible because of the volunteers who contribute to the practices, games and events, supporting the program... over 25 volunteers are actively involved from the Brock and Niagara community.

The Penguins also rely on support from organizations and community members who, year after year, provide donations and in-kind funding to support the program and athletes. The Niagara region is fortunate to have such a program, always with an eye on expansion to meet community needs and interest.

For more information about the Brock Niagara Penguins visit www.niagarapenguins.org or follow them on twitter #NiagaraPenguins.





On Course FOR INCLUSION

By Erin O'Sullivan

A day of epic swings, fun and inclusion was had at the first inaugural PARA PRO-AM GOLF TOURNAMENT created and hosted by ParaSport® Ontario and in partnership with the PGA of Canada and ParaGolf Ontario. With a focus on the game's inclusiveness for "everyBODY" the format of the event levelled the playing field for a competitive tournament.

Eighteen professional players from the PGA of Canada teamed up with eighteen paragolfers from ParaGolf Ontario, alongside celebrity guests and corporate competitors to comprise diverse five-player teams. United, the message was clear... the game of golf is accessible for all.

"Golf is a sport that is inherently inclusive," noted Jeff Tiessen, Executive Director of ParaSport Ontario (PO). "It's a sport for everyone, and it's remarkable to witness the excellence within the paragolf community - be it players with limb loss, or players with functional or mobility impairment, or even golfers who are visually impaired or blind."

Liberal MP Celina Caesar-Chavannes presented an award from the House of Commons during the dinner

portion of the tournament congratulating PO for its "role in the development of athletes with disabilities in our province and continued support toward providing active living opportunities and commitment to the principle of inclusive sports."

Leaders from the professional golf community as well as para golfers themselves helped guide the development of this truly unique event. An incredible network of sponsors - over 35 in all - as well as community partners, Paralympic athletes, volunteers and friends of PO came together to celebrate this tournament. Special guests included Greg Westlake, captain of Team Canada's National Para Ice Hockey team, as well as other Paralympians like multi-medal winning wheelchair racing legend Jeff Adams, gold-medal winning Para Ice Hockey goalie Paul Rosen, sprinter-turned-CBC broadcaster Rob Snoek and many more. Former Tampa Bay Lightning defenceman Paul Ranger joined "Crazy Canuck" Olympic skier Steve Podborski among the class of celebrity players participating.

Alan Dean, board of director for both PO and ParaGolf Ontario, a former Paralympian, and current director and member of the Aurora Sports Council, sparked the concept of the tournament by voicing the need to broaden the scope of inclusivity in the golf community. Kevin Thistle, CEO of PGA of Canada, was eager to contribute, proposing the idea of creating an event that could grow into the "Pebble Beach" of Canada, with that the PGA was involved. Thistle made the event



Photos by Michael Schneider

The Inaugural Para Pro-Am Golf Tournament



Photo by Archie Allison

One such guest was eight-year-old Khelyse Crowe-Kasule, who with her father Ivan had some incredible moments together on the greens. It was the first time since her injury three months earlier that she had met so many others with limb loss like herself. She was presented with her own set of TaylorMade junior golf clubs. Within weeks of the event, Khelyse was playing golf and benefiting from private lessons from Carrie Vaughan at Glen Abbey golf club. And so, her journey on the parasport path has begun.

Other young visitors from area centres, Variety Village, Abilities Centre and Holland Bloorview Kids Rehab Hospital, attended as well,

part of the RBC PGA of Canada Scramble series, which was an excellent incentive for participants in that Para Pro-Am Golf Tournament winners could move on to the provincial championship in Coppinwood, Ont.

The venue for the event was another key draw for participants, hosted at the Angus Glen Golf Club in Markham, Ont., known to be one of the most accessible golf clubs in Ontario while also boasting award-winning greens and notoriety as one of the premier golf courses in Canada.

Enthusiastic community partners helped drive the event forward and contributed to the success and fun of the day. Todd Keirstead, celebrity golf entertainer, trick-shot artist of the year, military advocate and a leader in the golf-for-all attitude ran two clinics under his Bring Back the Game banner. His clinics are at the same time inspiring, entertaining and educational, and introduced over 40 people with disabilities to a game they might not have ever considered to be one they could enjoy and even excel at.





Photo by Michael Schneider



participating in TRY Me sessions in a variety of different parasports hosted by PO's ambassadors who bring years of parasport experience and mentorship to every PO event.

The event received glowing coverage on CTV Toronto, with live on-site coverage seen by over one million viewers across the province, many who may have witnessed paragolfers in action for the very first time.

With such excellence on display, there was a general curiosity as to why the game of golf is not contested at the Paralympic Games. "There was much talk and enthusiasm throughout the day among sponsors, members of the parasport community and of course paragolfers themselves to see paragolf included in the 2024 Paralympic Games," said Joe Millage, PO Chair. "We are committed as an organization to take on the challenge of getting paragolf added to the Paralympic Games program. It's an ideal sport for international competition... it truly is a sport for everyBODY!"



Photo by Michael Schneider

For more on paragolf, visit the Canadian Amputee Golf Association at www.caga.ca or ParaGolf Ontario at www.paragolfontario.ca. For golfers who are blind or visually impaired, visit Ontario Visually Impaired Golfers at www.ontarioblindgolf.ca.



The aspiring golfer may be surprised to learn that the grand old game is an activity that challenges the entire body - building mobility, strength and endurance. With its focus on swinging, walking, bending, reaching and lifting, golfers need to prepare and be aware of their bodies.

Not to say that the links are a place for the strong of arm and back only. The beauty of the game is that it caters to enthusiasts of all ages and abilities. Contact ParaGolf Ontario, an association providing opportunities for golfers with disabilities, to participate in the "grand old game".

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“Golf is more than a game for me. It’s a vehicle to open minds to what’s possible.”

– Todd Keirstead

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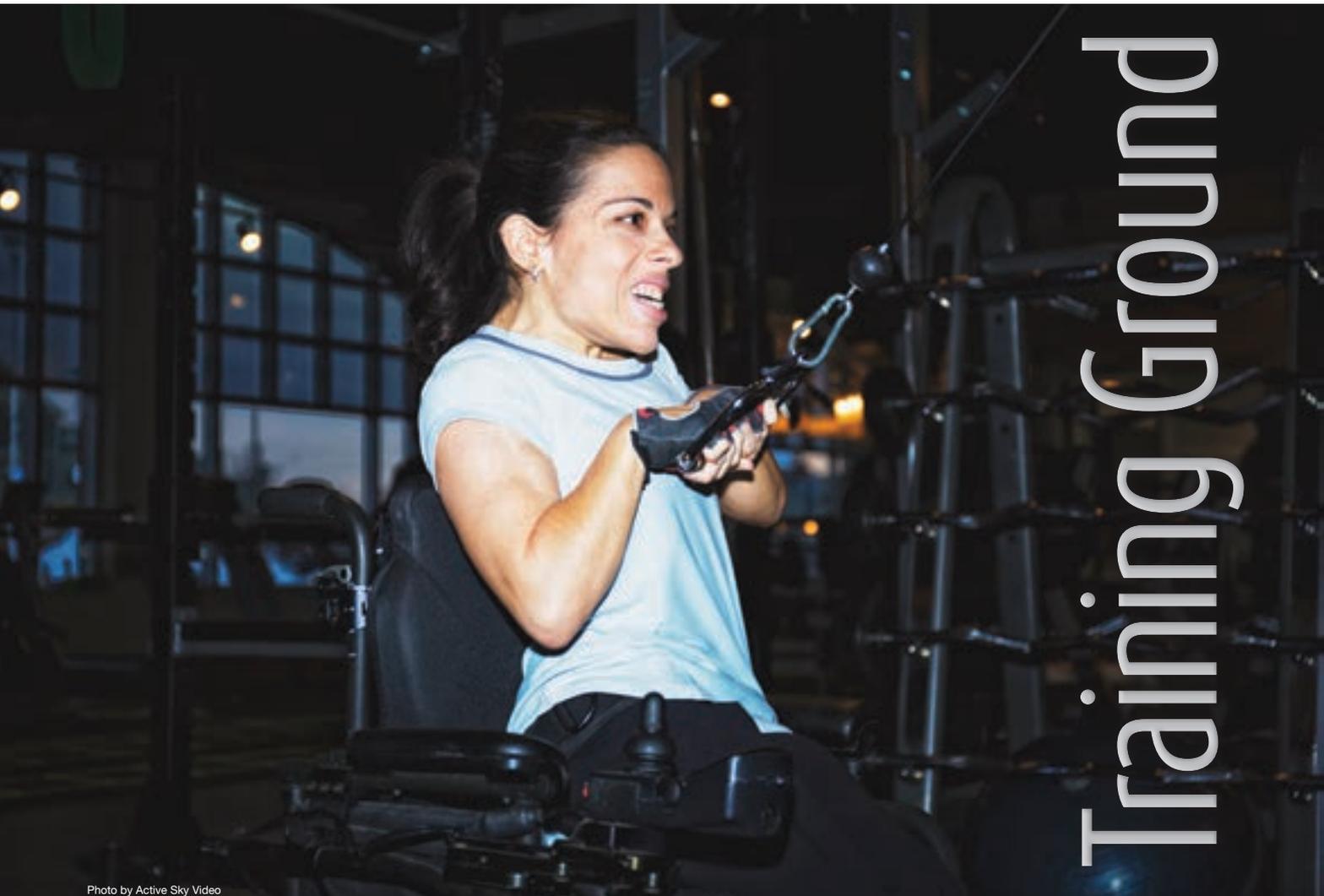
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Photo by Michael Schneider. Golfer pictured is Edward Urquhart.

Photo by Michael Schneider




 A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a light blue t-shirt and black pants, is seated in a wheelchair. She is smiling and looking to her right while holding the handles of a gym machine. The background is a dimly lit gym with large windows and various pieces of equipment.

Training Ground

Photo by Active Sky Video

New Places and Spaces for Fitness

ADVOCACY. AWARENESS. EMPOWERMENT. *Three simple words, but they carry a lot of meaning for Jess Silver, founder and director of Flex for Access Inc., a non-profit organization and a ParaSport® Ontario partner.*

Jess Silver knows all about the feeling of stepping into a new space and making it her own. Born with cerebral palsy, Silver was determined to not let anything stop her from her personal goals, ambitions and journey toward becoming a personal trainer. Although many attempted to impose limitations on her, Silver remained focused on her ambitions and philosophy towards training.

"It seems like it's just accepted that those with physical disabilities are often restricted to specific places to exercise, train or rehabilitate," laments Silver. "I didn't want to accept that and so I created Flex for Access Inc."

Taking on fitness and awareness challenges for people with disabilities is a huge priority for Silver. "As an individual with a physical challenge and a yearning



to pursue sport since I was young, I encountered a number of arduous tasks or obstacles in front of me. First, I had to show people how having cerebral palsy caused me to learn and execute movements in an adapted way, but at the same time always strive to participate in exercise in the same way as others.”

Through Flex For Access Inc., Silver has been able to push through her own limitations and prove to many doubters that fitness really is for everybody. Flex for Access creates spaces in conventional gyms and typically “able-bodied” environments that are accessible and adaptable for clients with physical differences.

Training for individuals with physical disabilities and injuries takes precedence for Silver, who is determined to help others engage in sport and training opportunities in more facilities. Things like advocating for accessibility, sourcing adaptive equipment and even overcoming anxiety about entering a new space are ways in which this powerful trainer is helping her clients overcome the challenges she once experienced.

Galvanized with a tough mental attitude and energized with a positive approach to fitness and training for every lifestyle, Silver emboldens her clients in their pursuit to become more active or enhance their exercise or training experience.

Silver can be contacted through the Flex for Access website at www.flexforaccess.ca or on social media.

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POWER PLAY

Pioneering Women's Sledge Hockey

By Erin O'Sullivan

CANADA IS A PROUD HOCKEY NATION, so it is no surprise that the women who make up Canada's Women's Sledge Hockey team are as fierce and dedicated to the sport as anyone else.

Claire Buchanan

In a male-dominated and predominantly able-bodied sport, there exists a core group of women who defy the odds to play proudly, live boldly and give no mercy on or off the ice.

"I can look around the room and know that every single person – players, coaches and volunteers – has sacrificed time, money and energy to be here," says Christina Picton, captain of the Team Canada Women's Sledge Hockey Team and player since 2006. "It's because we are passionate about the same thing and have the same goals," she adds. "That's an amazing feeling. It makes us more than a team; we are a family,"

Picton's sledge hockey journey began at 11 years old and she has watched the sport grow ever



since. From long training days and even longer days of travel for practice or competition, the women who play for Canada know that they are working towards a much bigger goal. Representation on the world stage is critically important for a younger generation growing up looking for role models.

“Getting to meet and mentor young female players is really exciting,” enthuses Picton. “We need to ensure a future for the women’s team. Hopefully we inspire them to keep playing and maybe one day play for the national team.”

In 2002, in Salt Lake City, Utah, the world witnessed men’s sledge hockey, now referred to as para ice hockey, at the Paralympic Games for the first time. Canada’s team competed under the umbrella of Hockey Canada and has at every Winter Paralympic Games since.

So, why hasn’t the women’s team made it to the Paralympic level yet? Firstly, the sport of women’s sledge hockey is not included in the Paralympic Games program. The more probing question is... and why is that?

On one side, the number of women playing sledge hockey around the world is not large or significant enough yet to include the sport in the Paralympics. That’s fair, but without becoming a Paralympic sport, the funding necessary to grow the sport is not available.

“Funding will help the sport grow tremendously and full support from National Sport Organizations and governing bodies of Paralympic sport would also be huge,” Picton explains.



“If girls with disabilities had the chance to see more para sports for them it would be incredible for the Paralympic movement.”

– Claire Buchanan

“This season, we saw some recognition starting with the Agitos Foundation and IPC [International Paralympic Committee] hosting and supporting different events geared towards developing women’s para ice hockey, which is a huge step forward. I think if the momentum we’ve gained in the last two years continues we will be at the Paralympics a lot sooner than we would’ve imagined just five years ago,” Picton offers.

Supporting sledge hockey is a fundamental step in supporting the women who play and the future generation of girls who will grow up with strong role models building the sport. Claire Buchanan, a forward for Team Canada, knows the impor-

ance of sports in building confidence and community for those who play.

“If girls with disabilities had the chance to see more para sports for them it would be incredible for the Paralympic movement,” notes Buchanan. “One of our biggest goals as an organization is to go out to different communities, promote our sport and get more girls and women playing sledge

hockey. It is up to us as athletes to be ambassadors for our sport and the goals we have for it,” she asserts.

Not only do these women help advance the sport and level of competition, they provide a space where women have leaders and guidance in the community to look up to and seek out for help. “I know how important it is to have role models around us,” admits Buchanan. “For any kid growing up it is vital to see that both men and women are capable of being successful athletes and individuals. Our goal is to encourage girls to be active and demonstrate how sports helps all aspects of our lives.”

The para ice hockey women who play often do so at their own expense, travelling across the country for practices and training clinics to help grow the future of the sport in smaller communities, and of course travelling internationally for games and tournaments.

Looking ahead, the players competing now have hopes that the sport will continue to gain support from new fans on social media and continue to develop for newcomers who want to take to the rink and try sledge hockey for themselves.



When the 2022 Paralympic Games kick-off in Beijing, China, the hope is that for the first time ever, Canada will be represented by two national para ice hockey teams... two decades removed from the Paralympic sled hockey debut for the men's event.

Outside of the Paralympic Games, the women still play at the highest level available for the sport currently. The 2018 Women's Para Ice Hockey World Cup took place in Ostrava, Czech Republic, and welcomed teams from Canada, Britain, United States, Finland, Norway, Sweden, The Netherlands, Japan, South Korea, France, Croatia, Czech Republic, Australia, and Armenia. With so many nations playing and raising the level

of support and recognition for the sport, the hope is that it won't be long until this exciting game reaches the highest level possible.

"The sport is hard," acknowledges Picton. "If you're just starting out and things seem impossible or you get frustrated, know that that is completely normal," she offers as advice for the uninitiated. "Don't get discouraged; just keep practicing and working hard. You'll get the hang of things." Picton continues, "also, it can be alienating to be a girl

or woman in a very male-dominated sport, but you can take some comfort in knowing that Women's Sledge Hockey of Canada is working hard to provide opportunities to play in all-female environments. For those looking for more information or a way to play, there are opportunities available and strong mentors out there to lead the way."



www.canadianwomensledgehockey.com has resources available for those looking to get involved in sled hockey for the first time, or to advance their level of play. Visit the website for more information today.



ZACH, AGE 9

Zach has cerebral palsy and uses an electric chair to get around. He has limited mobility and tends to require assistance when playing sports like sledge hockey. Since the Volt Hockey chairs only require the ability to toggle a joystick, Zach finally has the chance to move, play and score goals all on his own!

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Put Me in Coach

Getting Para-Athletes
in the Game

*Submitted by
the Coaches
Association
of Ontario*

MANY BELIEVE THAT COACHING A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY is more difficult than coaching a person who is able-bodied. But in fact, in many ways, it's the same. It takes a knowledge and passion for sport, along with an understanding of someone's capabilities. It's still all about knowing how to help them achieve a goal that they've set out to accomplish.

With Toronto's Para Pan Am Games in 2015, and the Invictus Games for ill and injured service members and veterans in 2017, and the Rio Paralympics in between, the impact that these games have had on our para-athletes is undeniable, and includes increased media coverage and public awareness. Canadians know more about parasport now than ever before. These games also provide future para athletes with inspiration and motivation, relevant role models, goals to strive for, and improved quality of life. As coaches, it is our duty to mentor and push these individuals with the same passion as any other athlete we coach.

Understand the Person

Just like any other athlete, learning about an athlete with a disability as a person will help coaches understand how para-athletes need to be coached. Are they interested in the competitive or the recreational stream? What are their goals? Do they believe in themselves? Is their disability something that they were born with or was it acquired? This

will help determine other factors, whether mental or physical, that may hinder their progression. Knowing our athletes as a whole person confirms for them that we truly care.

For some great examples of coaches who embrace this holistic approach, check out the Ontario Coaching Excellence Awards Winners videos on the Coaches Association of Ontario's YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/user/CoachesOntario

Educate Yourself

Every athlete's disability is different and it's important for coaches to understand how they will develop within their sport. The *Long-Term Athlete Development: Athletes with a Disability* model identifies stages that are very similar to those detailed for able-bodied athletes. Two exceptions to this model are related to age and rate of progress, which may vary due to the disability.

There are two additional stages in the *Athletes with a Disability* model: the Awareness stage (ensuring that those born with, or who have ac-

quired a disability are aware of sport opportunities) and the First Contact/ Recruitment stage (creating a positive environment to retain these athletes in the sport). Developing a better understanding of an athlete's disability will assist in planning practices and setting realistic goals, especially for early specialization sports. Coaches don't want to begin by teaching new athletes more complex skills when their fundamental movement skills have not yet been mastered.

The Coaching Association of Canada's *Coaching Athletes with a Disability* module is a great place for coaches to get started on their para coaching journey. *Coaching Athletes with a Disability* is a National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) eLearning module to diversify coaching portfolios. NCCP training provides coaches with the knowledge to deliver quality, positive sport experiences for athletes with behavioural, intellectual, physical, or sensory disabilities. It is an essential resource for coaches who are new to coaching athletes with a disability. And, many coaches who are already





working with athletes with a disability are finding useful information and resources in the online module.

The module provides coaches with the ability to...

- explain the benefits of sport participation for persons with a disability.
- communicate effectively and respectfully with persons with a disability.
- design positive, safe, and inclusive sport experiences for persons with a disability.
- consider next steps in their professional development related to coaching persons with a disability.

Coaches can access this fundamental resource at www.thelocker.coach.ca by logging into your NCCP Locker account.

Exposure to other Athletes

Coaches should encourage their athletes to volunteer at major games held each year around Ontario. Getting involved not only gives athletes a chance to give back to their sport or to a great cause, but it also provides them with the opportunity to see and sometimes meet athletes at a higher competitive level to re-instill the idea that they can make it as well. Coaches can share monthly stories about athletes who they can relate to... others who have faced difficulties and overcome them with hard work, dedication and patience. It becomes especially useful for those "I give up" moments. Additionally, take the time to go out and watch major games as a group. This will further foster the coach-athlete relationship and generate more awareness for other sports.

How Do You Develop Your Para-Athletes?

The Coaches Association of Ontario recently asked coaches... *"What are some of the ways you encourage athletes with disabilities to be unconquerable? How do you contribute to increasing the support and awareness of adaptive sports?"*

"In my experience with para-athletes, they want to be worked just as hard as able-bodied athletes. Once the basic skills are in place and the athlete is working to go harder, faster, stronger, it's easy to forget they are different at all. I like to maintain the basic principles of respect, dignity and trust with all my athletes... para- or able-bodied."

— Coach Katie,
Basketball, Toronto, 6 Years

"Working with para-athletes has made me a better coach. We often get into grooves of doing and saying the same things, but working with para-athletes provides you with the opportunity to re-develop old ideas and challenge yourself to be better. These athletes are some of the most dedicated and hardworking individuals I have ever worked with, and their 'differences' only make me a better coach for everyone, able-bodied and para-athlete."

— Coach Gord,
Hockey, Ottawa, 9 Years



"I have found that keeping open lines of communication with both the athlete and their parents (depending on the age of the athlete) provides the best possible outcomes. When I first started coaching para-athletes I wasn't always sure what kind of support they needed. I've learned that asking my swimmers what they need is best. Being open to learning new things and modifying your current coaching tactics can go a long way to making an athlete feel empowered and appreciated both in and out of the pool."

*– Coach Michael,
Swimming, Oshawa, 4 Years*

"We as coaches see the differences, but kids just want to be kids. They want to play the same games, do the same drills and race just like everyone else. If they think they can do it, why do we doubt or hinder them? Is it a doubt within ourselves? We as coaches have a duty to be inclusive, adaptable and push the limits for our athletes. Parents of para-athletes want the same treatment we give everyone else. So next time, do not doubt them or create something special for them. Let them be who they are. Let them show you what they can do."

*– Coach Lucy,
Athletics, Toronto, 11 Years*

For more information on coaching athletes with a disability,
visit the Coaches Association of Ontario at www.coachesontario.ca.

A GUIDED TOUR



Photos by: Dave Holland/Canadian Paralympic Committee

MAC MARCOUX *Makes His Mark on the Mountain*

By Erin O'Sullivan

AT JUST 16 YEARS OLD *this young skier from Sault Ste-Marie, Ont., stood proudly at the top of a Russian mountain, outfitted in his nation's team colours for the first time, ready to compete in the men's visually impaired downhill event. Four years later, in PyeongChang, South Korea, Mac Marcoux would prepare to do it again.*

Four years ago in Sochi, Russia, Marcoux won gold in the visually impaired giant slalom event and claimed bronze medals in both the downhill and super-G events. His debut in the

Paralympic Games at just 16 years old made him the youngest team member of the Canadian Para-alpine ski crew at those Games. Marcoux repeated his success in 2018 with another gold and two bronze medals at the Winter Paralympic Games in South Korea.

Competing in the downhill race, his gold medal run clocked in at one minute, 23.93 seconds. His guide in that race, Jack Leitch, beamed with pride next to Marcoux on the podium after an intense ten days of competition. For both Marcoux and Leitch, these games were the culmination of years

of hard work, countless months of dedicated training and a determined attention to mental preparation ultimately bringing them to the podium together.

"Being on the road as a competitive skier since I was fourteen, it teaches you a ton about yourself and how to be an advocate for yourself, to ask for help when you need it, and being able to take care of yourself," explains Marcoux. Add to that a lesson in discipline, with a commitment to his sport that got him up at 5:00 a.m. every day for training to be on the slopes for 9:00.



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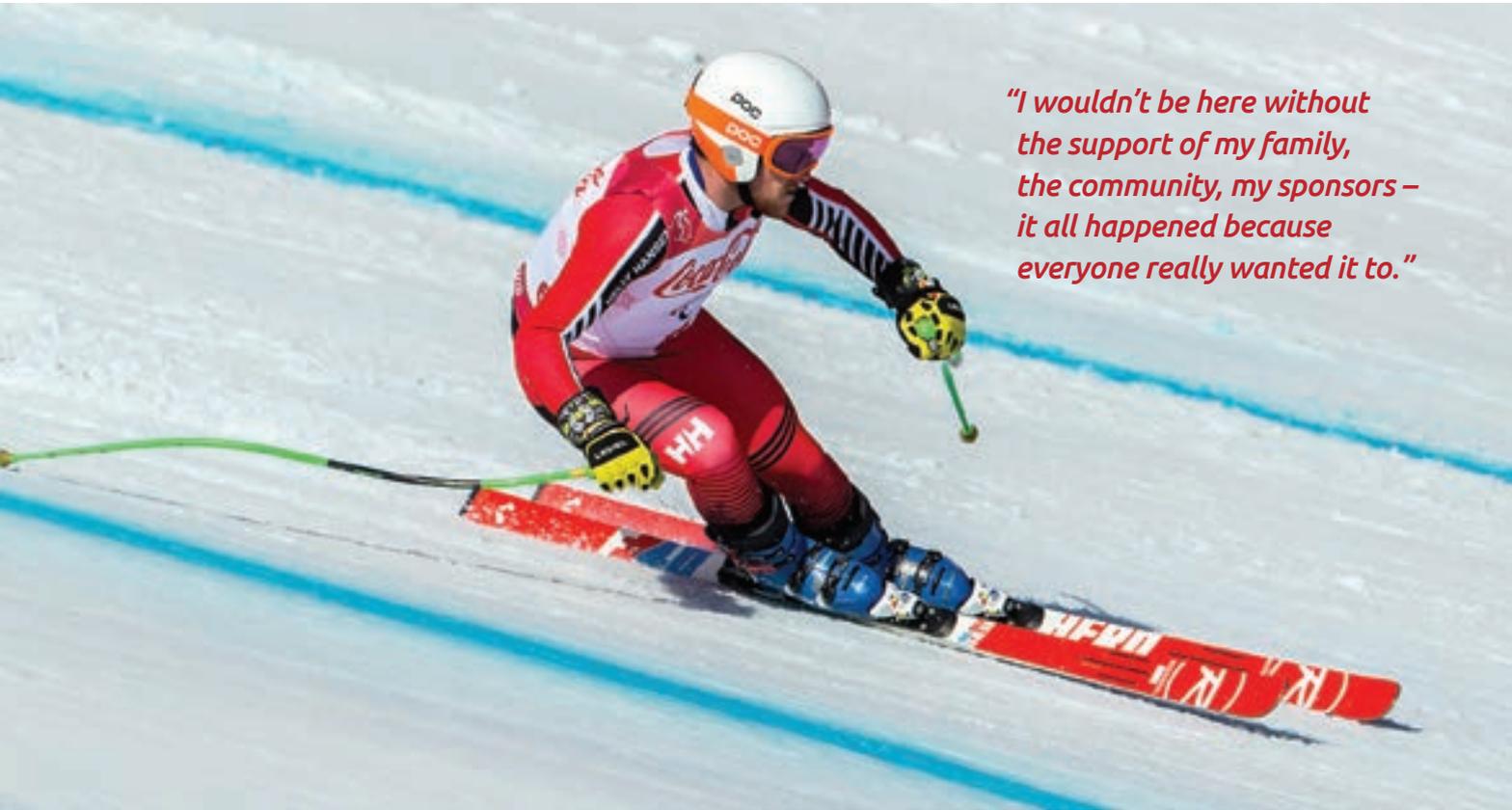
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"I wouldn't be here without the support of my family, the community, my sponsors – it all happened because everyone really wanted it to."

Marcoux likes to keep things simple on race days, no exciting music, no meditation zones. But he does have good advice for those looking to keep their mental focus when it comes to competition time. "Keeping a routine that's similar to training is, I think, the biggest thing for me. We train how we race. Every morning we get up and we do our warmups before we get out on the snow or on the course, doing everything strictly the same way. You just feel more prepared when it comes to your race start time for sure."

When it comes to competition, Marcoux credits many others in his life for helping him train and compete at the intense level that he does and succeed. "I wouldn't be here without the support of my family, the community, my sponsors – it all happened because everyone really wanted it to. Always remaining positive and staying focused on what we were trying to accomplish made it easier on the tough days. Having outlets to reach out to is

super important to my skiing when it comes right down to it."

Marcoux's brother, Billy Joe, was a key cog in Mac's early success. Billy Joe skied with his then 14-year-old younger brother as his guide when Mac began to fly across the country to train to be the best in his sport. After Billy Joe suffered a back injury just before the Winter Paralympics in Sochi in 2014, Marcoux was guided by Robin Fémy and later by Leitch.

For future Paralympians looking to embark on their own athletic journey, Marcoux advises that there are no short cuts to success. Join the sports and clubs available, work hard and enjoy what you do.

While it may not be an easy road and there will be challenges, Marcoux has some great advice: "Take the losses as they come and find the positives in them and work forward. That's sometimes tough to do when you're younger, but you learn that there's always tomorrow to do better; just keep pushing and move forward."



For more on the Paralympic Games and Canada's Paralympians, visit the Canadian Paralympic Committee at www.paralympics.ca.



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Photos courtesy of Ontario Track 3 Ski Association

Making

Every now and then a fresh approach, new ideas and a strategic plan help propel non-profit organizations to greater success. And success in the adaptive recreation sector, which never meets the growing demand for programming, means a constant search for the almighty grail of sustainability. Times are changing and in the case of Ontario Track 3 Ski Association, with a proud 40-plus-year history of success, the time has come to make some new tracks.

Sustainability for Track 3 means focusing on long-term donor and funder procurement, building amazing partners in the industry and most importantly of all, increasing its volunteer ski and snowboarding instructor base.

"Volunteers are the lifeblood of this organization – we are putting out a refreshed platform to make sure that the experience we offer our valued volunteer instructors fits in with their lifestyle," says Naomi Schafler, Executive Director.

Striking at the heart of the incredible impact this organization provides

to children with cognitive and physical disabilities, the Track 3 Board has redefined their value proposition to focus their energy on Inclusion, ability and freedom.

"We want to create a culture where our tenured volunteers are encouraged to motivate and empower younger volunteers, giving them the feeling of trust, responsibility and satisfaction," explains Fayaz Teja, a volunteer sit ski instructor and Board Director with Track 3. "Looking at volunteer recruitment from the perspective of



“Track 3 taught me how to fly on my own. Now I’m back as a volunteer, mentoring young sit skiers. What an amazing way to give back!”

– George Alevizos (in yellow),
Track 3 Beaver Valley Program

NEW TRACKS

the next generation means investing in strategies that capitalize on their time (which is increasingly more limited), skills and personal goals.”

Ontario Track 3 Ski Association started out with a few committed volunteers who wanted to provide a ski experience for children with physical disabilities. Over 40 years later, this charitable organization is still making magic on the snowy hills at many of Ontario’s private ski resorts. More than 330 instructors every season are required to fulfill

the demand of approximately 8,195 teaching hours.

Students learn to ski and snowboard with adaptive equipment and teaching techniques. The physical health and social benefits are huge, appreciated by every family in the program. But the more important successes come with building confidence and independence. Those intangible benefits, which appeal to student athletes and volunteer instructors alike, are where the true path to inclusion, ability and freedom lie.

Ontario Track 3 Ski Association is always looking for new volunteer instructor recruits. Experience the best seven days of your alpine season by joining us for a fun-filled skiing or snowboarding adventure with our athletes.

Visit www.Track3.org for details or call the Central Office: 416-233-3872.



PARA **DanceSport** *Rolls into Canada*

By Iris Kulbatski, PhD

As the days get shorter, the temperature drops, and we wind down after a busy summer, new opportunities to connect and turn up the heat present themselves. WHEEL DANCE is excited to kick off our new season with new programs and events for people of all ages and abilities! We hope you'll take the time to get to know us, learn about our activities, and get involved in our ongoing and upcoming classes and events.

What do a movement therapist, physiotherapist, physiatrist, professional choreographer, championship-level Ballroom and Latin dance instructor, sports classifier, and medical researcher have in common? Well... they're all part of a growing team of professionals who are paving the way for Para DanceSport in Canada.

Though not an official sport on the Paralympic program, Para DanceSport

is governed by the International Paralympic Committee, and organized by the World Para DanceSport Technical Committee. A popular sport practiced in many countries, it incorporates the grace, elegance, physical stamina and artistry of competitive partner dance. Athletes can compete as a duo couple (two wheelchair dancers), combi (one wheelchair dancer and one standing partner), group (wheelchair dancers only or with





standing partners), formation (four to eight couples), or single (one wheelchair dancer). Dance genres focus predominantly on Ballroom and Latin dance, with additional opportunities for freestyle show dances that include a range of other dance genres.

Generously funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation since 2014, WHEEL DANCE is a Canadian non-profit that provides subsidized social and competitive wheelchair Ballroom and Latin dance classes to wheelchair users and their friends, family, and community members. WHEEL DANCE is the national body for Para DanceSport in Canada recognized by Canada DanceSport and the World DanceSport Federation. More recently, WHEEL DANCE has become an official partner of ParaSport® Ontario, an exciting

milestone that further supports our efforts to promote sports and physical activity to individuals with disabilities.

WHEEL DANCE is proud to be training dancers, instructors and classifiers, as well as organizing competitions and workshops, thereby building the infrastructure and governance of Para DanceSport from the ground up. For example, WHEEL DANCE has trained the first Canadian Para DanceSport classifiers, developed internationally-recognized classification training materials, and supported the training of the first internationally-recognized World Para DanceSport classifier in Canada and North America.

Above all, we are committed to introducing as many people as possible to the joy of dance, by providing social and competitive dance opportunities.

Our objective is to help spread Para DanceSport across the province and country, at a level of popularity similar to that of other regions, such as Europe. Our classes are subsidized, removing the financial barriers to dance that often prevent people from pursuing lessons. We believe that dance is for every *body* and its social, psychological and physical benefits should be universally accessible.

A Bit About Classtime

Meeting weekly in a quiet suburb of Toronto, WHEEL DANCE classes are led by various professionals including a movement therapist, a championship-level Ballroom and Latin dance instructor, a professional choreographer, a physiotherapist, and others. Each instructor brings unique skills and experience, encouraging our dancers to learn new athletic and artistic skills, and develop their potential. Through improvisation, range of motion exercises, interactive warm-ups, techniques for improving body awareness and movement vocabulary, freestyle dancing, basic and advanced Ballroom and Latin dance techniques, or structured choreographies – the goal is to engage, be active and have fun!

Our classes include private sessions, social group lessons, and competitive-level group and private classes. Whether you're interested in learning and performing a specific choreography, improving your social dance skills for clubs, parties, and weddings, understanding how to connect to your partner and to the music in a fun and social atmosphere, or learning Ballroom and Latin dance technique for performance and competition, WHEEL DANCE has a class to suit your goals.

Partner dancing has many benefits, including improved strength, posture, coordination, endurance, balance, flexibility, range of motion, mood, stress management, confidence, memory, concentration and general fitness. As a social activity, wheelchair partner dancing encourages new friendships and promotes understanding and communication

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between people with and without disabilities. Wheelchair dancers and their standing partners have formed unique, long-term connections and friendships on and off the dance floor, creating a community of caring, warmth, encouragement, support and inclusivity.

Competitions and Dancers

In 2016, in collaboration with Ontario DanceSport and Canada DanceSport, WHEEL DANCE ran the first annual Para DanceSport competition in North America, attracting participants from Canada, Mexico and the United States. Our third annual Competition/Showcase at the Ontario Open Championships took place in October 2018 and featured the excitement and beauty of wheelchair Ballroom and Latin dance sportsmanship and entertainment. It marked a major milestone for both WHEEL DANCE and Para DanceSport in Canada as a whole, as WHEEL DANCE, Canada DanceSport and Ontario DanceSport celebrated the receipt of a new collaborative Grow Grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

Newcomer, Jane Warner, joined our program last fall after attending our annual competition as a spectator. After six months she performed her debut choreography at Beyond Ballroom. When asked how she feels about dance, Jane shared: "When I am dancing it is two hours of letting go of any stress or worries that I have, work or home. I just dance. I have always wanted to dance and have found a place that is welcoming and has given me the freedom to express myself as a dancer."

WHEEL DANCE is committed to providing opportunities for individuals to push beyond their perceived limitations by learning to relate to themselves, their wheelchairs, and their community in new ways. We love hearing from you, so if you have any questions, suggestions, or would just like to say hello, feel free to get in touch online or by phone.

The WHEEL DANCE Family

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About the Author: Dr. Iris Kulbatski is Founder and Executive Director of WHEEL DANCE. She holds a PhD in Medical Science, with a specialization in spinal cord regeneration. She is grateful to be a part of the WHEEL DANCE community and for the opportunity to bring awareness to issues of accessibility and inclusivity.

When surveyed about how participating in WHEEL DANCE contributes to their overall physical and emotional well-being, our participants expressed the following:

"I often visit the community center gym. I sweat more at WHEEL DANCE."

"Keeps me active and lets me dance with my wife."

"It's fun, interactive and makes me feel good. I've developed more self-confidence since I've started."

"My core as well as my arms and upper body strength has increased significantly."

"Closer connection with my wife/partner."

"I have become stronger and can turn the upper part of my body more than I used to."

"Makes me feel more confident and like I can participate more in social gatherings."

"Gives me better posture, endurance and strength."

"Feeling of accomplishment, happier with myself and with being able to share with others."

"Increases stamina, helps with breathing, flexibility, circulation."

"WHEEL DANCE has become family and it's always great to see everyone and enjoy our time together."

"It gives me a sense of inclusion and pride and allows me to forget everything and just enjoy the moment."

"Makes me feel happy."

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Photo: Matthew Murnaghan/Canadian Paralympic Committee

PEDAL POWER

Braced for Success with a Custom Orthotic Device

By Emma Holmes

From a rocky recovery after a cycling accident, to rocking the para-cycling world on her custom-made trike, SHELLEY GAUTIER IS GOING FOR PARALYMPIC GOLD IN TOKYO 2020.

Shelley Gautier's road to becoming a renowned para-cycling champion began unexpectedly 17 years ago. An avid mountain biking racer, she crashed her bike while holidaying in Vermont, suffering a severe brain injury. She was in a coma for six weeks, which left her with hemiplegia, or one-sided paralysis, affecting the right side of her body.

An arduous six months in a rehab hospital followed, made all the more difficult by the fact that the staff at the hospital didn't quite know what to do with her. "I was wearing a brace from Shoppers, one designed for a sprained ankle, which hardly addressed my mobility issues," Gautier recalled. "Finally Pat McKee, an Associate Professor Emerita at the University of Toronto, referred me to Gordon Ruder, a certified orthotist at Boundless Biomechanical Bracing.



She said this was someone who could help me.”

It helped that Ruder was a competitive cyclist as well; it gave him a unique skill set, an understanding of the elements integral to both custom orthotics and competitive cycling.

The first step in Ruder’s treatment plan was to get Gautier back to independent living with an ankle-foot-orthosis (AFO). This is a brace that helps to control the position and motion of the ankle, and is one that Gautier still wears daily. With mobility on her right side partially restored, it was back to her dream of racing competitively.

Gautier returned to racing within a year of her accident, using a specially-modified tricycle designed to increase stability. Tricycle athletes are divided into two classes, T1 and T2. Gautier competes in the T1 class for athletes with more significant co-ordination difficulties and greater loss of muscle power than those in the T2 class. Since Gautier cannot use her right hand, her custom tricycle has been adapted so that the gears,

shifters and brakes are all on the left side of the trike. Although she has limited movement in her affected right leg, she can still use that leg to pedal the trike.

This is where her specially-designed orthotic device comes in. “My coach Eric Van den Eynde came up with what I needed in terms of an orthosis for racing,” she explained. “Using that knowledge, Gord took it from there.”

Ruder created a rigid racing ankle-foot-orthosis (AFO) that connects directly to the pedal so there is no unwanted leg movement. “This reduces inefficient movement in the leg as much as possible,” he explained. “So whatever power Shelley has in her affected leg can now be dedicated to moving herself forward.”

For Gautier, the rigid AFO allows her to produce a full circle all the way without stopping in her racing loop, which is essential to qualify for the trials. “With the AFO, I don’t stop, and that helps me shave milliseconds off of my time,” she enthused.

Another orthotic device that

Gautier uses for competition is a wrist-hand-orthosis (WHO), which allows her to steer with her affected right arm. This means she doesn’t have to rely solely on her left hand to brake and steer at the same time. “It keeps my wrist straight in competition,” she stated. “If I don’t bend my wrist, it makes it easier to grab the handlebar.”

With many wins behind her, Gautier has achieved international success, receiving major recognition in 2015 when she was nominated for the prestigious Laureus World Sports person of the Year with a Disability Award. A silver medalist at the Guadalajara 2011 Parapan American Games, she went on to win a bronze medal at the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games. Currently she is training for the 2020 Paralympic Games in Japan with a new tricycle, which will entail accommodations to her brace.

“I’m using a tricycle that’s two inches shorter than the one I used in the previous Paralympic Games. I’m riding without a cross bar. Gord is making the brace modifications to accommodate these changes,” says Gautier.

When not training for competitions, Gautier can be found wheeling around the city on her tricycle. She also launched the Shelley Gautier Foundation in 2014, and donates her time to different programs at the University of Toronto, including the anatomy and occupational therapy departments. And yet, while she is proud of her athletic achievements, she is also a person who fully embraces the smaller everyday pleasures in life.

“It’s really important that people understand what orthotic devices are,” she emphasized. “Yes, my braces allow me to win races, but they also allow me to get out of the house and interact with my community. People with mobility issues can become isolated, so we need to get out there, be social and do the things we love.”



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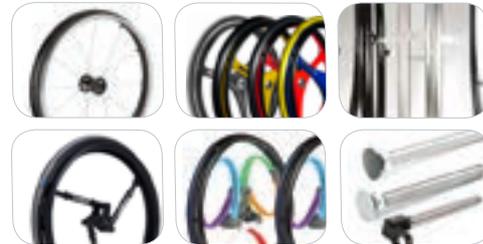
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