

ParaSport[®]

MAGAZINE

FALL/WINTER 2022/2023



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2022/2023

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WELCOME

*“Learn from the past, live in the present,
plan for the future.” – Audrey Farrell*

As the new Executive Director of ParaSport® Ontario, I began by engaging with as many people as possible to learn the rich history of ParaSport Ontario and gain context and understanding of how things came to be.

As we continue to emerge from the pandemic and other healthcare concerns across the province, I am not only energized by the enthusiasm and passion of members of the disability community, but I see a future of endless possibilities for people of all abilities to be more active and find the sport or activity that they love.



Within months of beginning, I was able to meet and witness first-hand some amazing paragolfers in action at ParaSport Ontario's 5th Annual Para Pro-Am Golf Tournament. I was inspired by the enthusiastic support shown by team participants, sponsors, and PGA Professionals who came to play at Lebovic Golf Club in Aurora – many of whom have supported this tournament since its inception.

The overall impact exceeded expectations and brought people together in the spirit of inclusion and excellence, while enjoying their time on the beautiful course. At the end of the day, funds were raised for the Meridian™ Play to Podium Fund to provide adaptive sports equipment to people with disabilities. This impact will be seen for years to come.

Coming from a career at Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital, I am excited to translate my knowledge and experiences to lead this incredible team at ParaSport Ontario and work with a passionate Board of Directors. With a strong mission of supporting all members of the disability community to find their sport or activity of choice, we are in a strong position to expand our network and our impact in 2023, all the while continuing to connect the system across Ontario.

James Murphy
Executive Director, ParaSport® Ontario

PS: Join us as a Member of the ParaSport® Ontario Family, and receive ParaSport® Magazine, our monthly e-newsletters and much more, for FREE. Sign up at www.parasportontario.ca.

ParaSport® MAGAZINE

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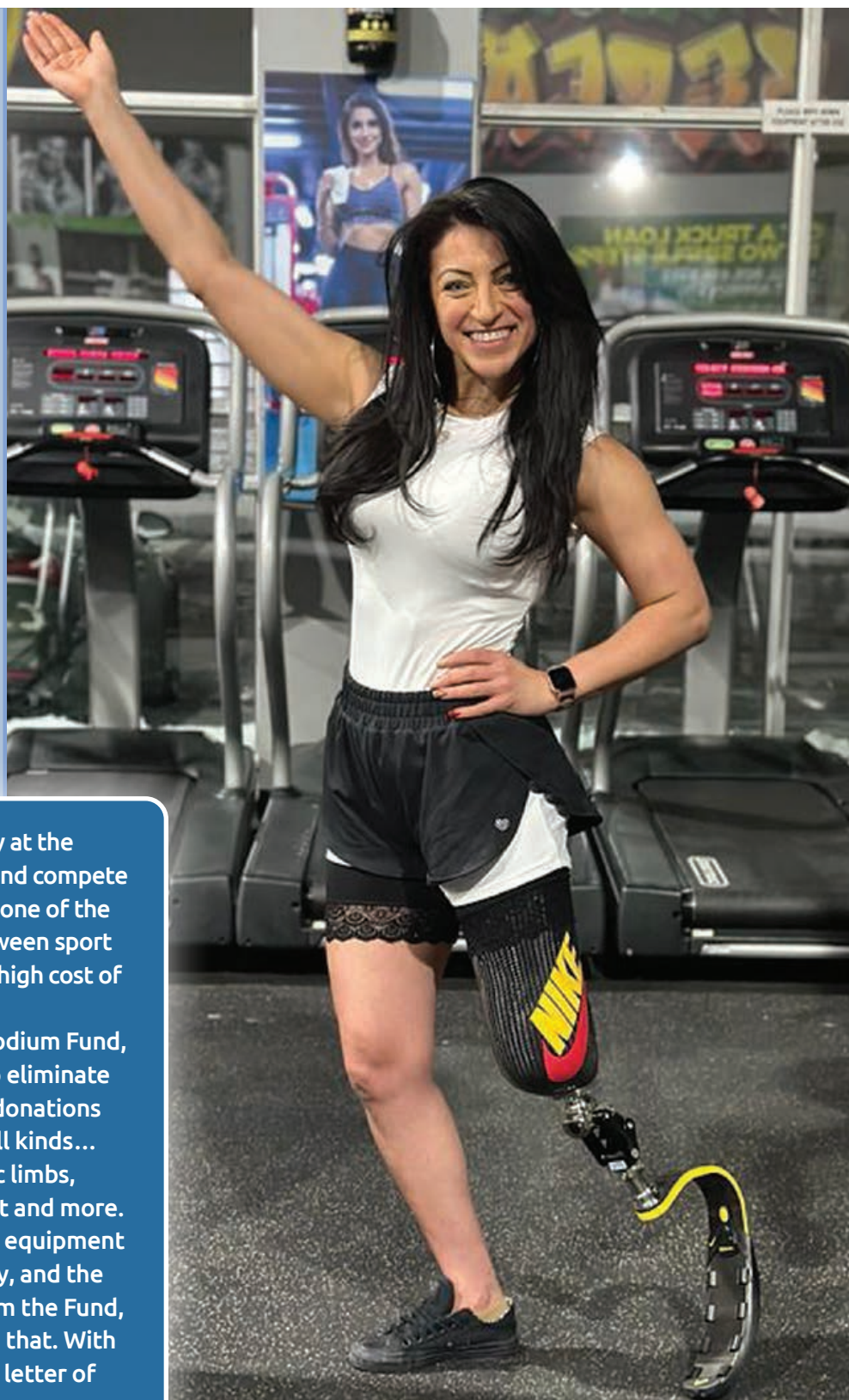


a Letter of Thanks

Whether it is to play recreationally at the neighbourhood court, or to train and compete competitively on the world stage, one of the biggest obstacles that stands between sport and people with disabilities is the high cost of adaptive sport equipment.

Through its Meridian Play to Podium Fund, ParaSport® Ontario (PO) works to eliminate this barrier to participation with donations of adaptive sport equipment of all kinds... sports wheelchairs and prosthetic limbs, hockey sledges, boccia equipment and more.

PO knows that adaptive sports equipment can impact lives in a profound way, and the latest recipient of equipment from the Fund, Rouzalin Hakim, is a testament to that. With her permission, we're sharing her letter of thanks – an impact statement for sure.



When I received the exciting news that I was a lucky recipient of the Meridian Play to Podium Fund I one-leggedly jumped for joy. The donation included a new Cheetah Knee and Flex Run blade donated by Össur Canada and a dedicated running socket and clinical services from PBO Toronto. As a new amputee, just trying to get my everyday leg sorted was very overwhelming with so many different factors to consider. Having a running leg to add to my collection is a great blessing.

On top of that, I'm so proud to be the Fund's first female recipient of the Össur running blade and that means so much to me... a bragging point I never forget to mention when introducing my blade to people.

Before my accident about a year and a half ago I was extremely healthy and active. I was always working out in the gym, always joining boot camp classes and group fitness activities, and I absolutely loved hiking.

But nothing trumped my favourite activity – running. Actually, hill-running to be exact. Finding that inner strength to keep going at the highest incline was so exhilarating and rewarding, not to mention painful (in a good way). Nothing was as satisfying as a hill-run fresh in the morning to set my day off right.

I remember lying in a hospital bed thinking about all of the things I wouldn't be able to do again, and running certainly topped that list. So, imagine just how overjoyed I was to know that with the help of Össur Canada and PBO (Prothetics, Bracing, Orthotics) Group, the facility that made it all come together for me, I would have that chance again. I'm so thankful for ParaSport® Ontario's Meridian Play to Podium Fund for the donation of this equipment.

Just knowing that my Össur blade, and knee, was on its way gave me a boost of energy in my daily workouts. The whole process was nothing short of incredible. My prosthetist, Jeremy Nokes, CP(c), and the entire team at PBO Toronto were so helpful every step of the way. PBO Group donated the cost of the socket and their clinical services so I would be able to have a full leg set-up as opposed to constantly having to change from leg to leg which can be discouraging to use it frequently.

At my initial fitting, the team at PBO Toronto introduced me to Kebba Njai, a competitive amputee runner, to teach me how to safely start my running journey. It was such an exciting day. I picked it up so quickly. It almost felt natural right away.

I received my beautiful blade 14 months, to the day, after my accident. Thinking about it now, just over a year ago I thought I'd never run again. But with this gift from Össur Canada and PBO Toronto, I now know I can. And I do, almost EVERYDAY.

When I first got my everyday prosthesis with the Össur Rheo knee I trained nearly every day to accomplish 30 minutes on the elliptical machine. Now that I have my Cheetah running blade, I run 3-4 times a week! I think I run more now than before my accident... ha-ha!! I rush through my weight training so I can change legs and hop on the treadmill. My gym owner was kind enough to give me a corner locker right next to the treadmills, where my blade rests until it's running time.

My daily goal is to run short intervals and slowly increase the duration so that when it's time to finally get on a track I'll be able to do a full lap without stopping. I can't thank the people involved in this donation enough for this gift. Every day with my blade I'm so grateful and inspired to be a better version of my yesterday.

Thank-You
Rouzalin Hakim

GROWTH SPURT *for Sitting Volleyball*

The game of sitting volleyball has grown significantly in Ontario in the past four years thanks to focussed support from the Ontario Volleyball Association and its partnership with ParaSport® Ontario.

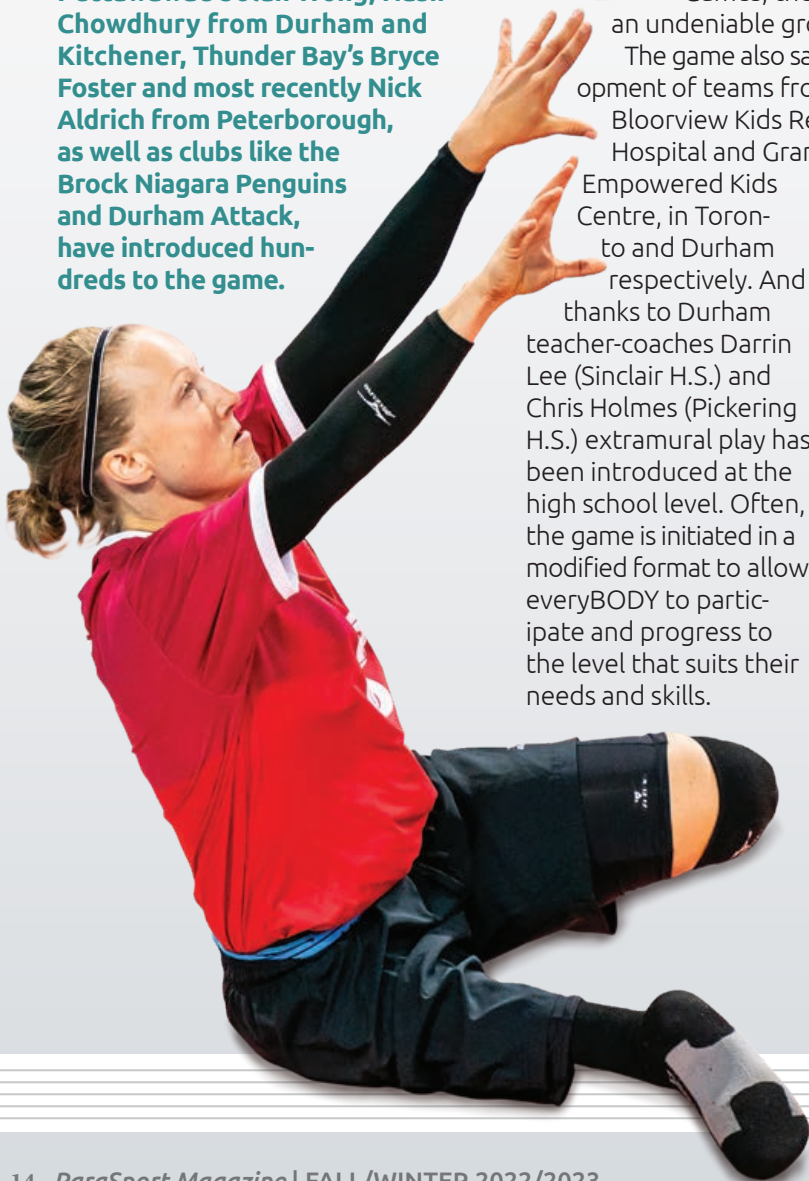
National team athletes like Toronto's Darek Symonowicz, Pettawawa's Jolan Wong, Nasif Chowdhury from Durham and Kitchener, Thunder Bay's Bryce Foster and most recently Nick Aldrich from Peterborough, as well as clubs like the Brock Niagara Penguins and Durham Attack, have introduced hundreds to the game.

Supported by the likes of the Ontario Trillium Foundation, Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities, Variety Village, Abilities Centre, Rotary Club of Whitby and the Durham's Ontario Parasport Games, the sport is in an undeniable growth spurt.



The game also saw the development of teams from Holland Bloorview Kids Rehab Hospital and Grandview Empowered Kids Centre, in Toronto and Durham respectively. And thanks to Durham teacher-coaches Darrin Lee (Sinclair H.S.) and Chris Holmes (Pickering H.S.) extramural play has been introduced at the high school level. Often, the game is initiated in a modified format to allow everyBODY to participate and progress to the level that suits their needs and skills.

Para Volley (sitting volleyball) is a long-standing Paralympic Games sport with more than 10,000 participants playing in 55 countries worldwide. There is a classification system based on performance impacted by: limb deficiency, amputation, leg length difference, hypertonia, ataxia, athetosis, spinal cord injury, loss of range of motion, and/or loss of muscle strength. ParaSport Ontario can assist if you're interested in getting classified.



For more information, contact Kerish Maharaj at kmaharaj@ontariovolleyball.org or provincial liaison and coach Joe Millage at emtjoe@rogers.com.

TRAIL BLAZER

Joëlette and Co by Ferriol-Matrat offers a range of adaptive sports and recreational equipment. Based in France, the company promotes sports and recreation for people with reduced mobility focusing on inclusive outdoor activities.

In 1987, Joël Claudel, a mountain guide, had the idea for the first Joëlette to assist his nephew who lived with muscular dystrophy. A sedan chair with a bucket seat, a central wheel and four bars for the two guides, are still the basic elements of the Joëlette.

Stéphane, his nephew, discovered the beautiful nature of the Ile of Reunion, and the Atlas Mountains in Morocco. What was unimaginable had been made possible. Ferriol-Matrat is now the exclusive producer of the Joëlette.

For more information, contact Gilles Roue, Joelette & Co Canada at joelette.qc.ca@gmail.com or call (438) 408-9899. Visit www.joeletteandco.com.



40 YEARS
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D'IMPACT

Ontario Trillium Foundation Turns 40

Since 1982, the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) has invested in the vital work of non-profit organizations to build healthy and vibrant communities. Ontario's diverse non-profits play a critical role in the province's communities and touch virtually all aspects of our lives – ranging from health, education and arts, to physical activity, environment, and culture.

For four decades, OTF has helped organizations deliver essential programs and services, create meaningful employment opportunities, and strengthen community connections by mobilizing volunteers.

"The work of the Ontario Trillium Foundation makes a positive, lasting difference in the lives of individuals and families across the province," said Neil Lumsden, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. "We thank them for building stronger communities."

OTF has supported non-profit organizations by investing more than \$2.6 billion into 28,000+ grants and improving 8.2 million-sq-ft of physical infrastructure to create safe, accessible and culturally relevant spaces.

Its story began in the early 1980s. It was a difficult economic time for the non-profit sector. Government funding and private sector donations had decreased. Charities of all sizes were worried about how to fund needed programs and meet essential community needs.

A group of leaders emerged from Ontario's charitable and private sectors with a vision for a foundation that could play an important role in fostering a healthy and vibrant Ontario.

"The leadership of Trillium has been a co-operative effort from the beginning, involving some of the finest minds in the province, who, together, shared a vision that they could make a difference," said John Craig Eaton, founding chairman.

The group lobbied the provincial government to support charitable work, and the Trillium Foundation was established to help fund social service organizations in Ontario.



LEADING THE WAY

A newly-created social media campaign from Canoe Kayak Ontario (CKO) Sprint is amplifying the voices of minorities in the paddling community. Mike Trauner, a veteran and successful multi-sport para-athlete, was recently spotlighted by CKO.

The goal of Leading the Way is to inspire the next generation of paddlers. In doing so, the campaign's theme is "be the person you needed when you were younger."

CKO Sprint has also developed a Paracanoe Talent Identification and Talent Transfer program. The program provides support to talented para-athletes within the sport and recruits elite para-athletes from other parasports. The goal of the program is to identify, recruit and train talented athletes and coaches to reach international podium performances within three to four years.

If interested in joining the program, contact CKO Technical Director Ryan Blair at ryan@ckosprint.ca.



Para Snowsport Training Centre Welcomed

The 2022-23 ski season brought the introduction of the Canadian Para Snowsport Training Centre (CPSTC), a competition program created by CADS Alberta, the province's sport organization for adaptive alpine skiing and snowboarding.

CADS Alberta focuses on supporting athletes from within its own border but welcomes out-of-province and international athletes to CPSTC. "Our goal is to provide athletes with an on-and-off-snow training hub to allow them to pursue their personal goals, developmental or at the high-performance level," says CPSTC Program Director, Ozzie Sawicki.

Housed in Cochrane, and using Nakiska, Mt. Norquay and Canada Olympic Park as on-snow training locations, Sawicki adds that "CPSTC athletes remain part of their home club,



province, or country, while taking advantage of our strong coaching team and program. We're excited to have several Ontario para-Alpine athletes in our program."

This type of centralized collaboration provides athletes with a well-coached program structure and exposure to a cross-section of talent. It helps guide their own personal athletic development, on and off the snow. "We see athletes from a learn-to-train level through to train-to-compete and train-to-win levels, which will certainly impact growth

in development of athletes in Alberta," offers Sawicki. "But ultimately, a collaborative training base strengthens opportunities for athletes regardless of their home program."

For more information, contact Ozzie Sawicki at programdirector@cadsalberta.ca or call (403) 651-4000.



Photo courtesy of Brock University

NIAGARA FOUNDATION *Scores for SLEDGE*

The Niagara Peninsula Foundation for Children is all about supporting youth in its region. Its directors liked what they saw in the Niagara Sledge Hockey League enough to host a fundraising breakfast to ensure youth of all abilities can play hockey in Niagara.

Chase Myers is a great example of a young player who benefits from their donation. The 10-year-old athlete from St. Catharines has always been an exceptional hockey player. But he thought his hockey days were done after a Perthes disease diagnosis in 2021, a condition that threatens hip deterioration by restricting blood flow.

Left on crutches for months, he was left feeling that he could no longer participate in his favourite sport until, he was introduced to sledge hockey through ParaSport® Ontario.

"Kids with a physical disability are at a real disadvantage with respect to playing sport," Foundation chair Jack Foster said. The foundation, which has donated over \$300,000 since its inception in 2014, was thrilled to ensure that Chase and other youngsters are back on

the ice. "Sports are so important for children and for the community," Foster added.

"The Foundation's mandate has always been to help children with special needs, but that is no longer limited to intellectual and physical disabilities," Foster shared. "Nowadays there are economic barriers as well."

The fundraising event featured a sledge hockey demonstration where everyone was given an opportunity to sit in a sledge and shoot on net, with players from Brock University's Badgers Varsity Hockey Team being perhaps the most enthusiastic.

"Events like this are super-important opportunities to grow parasport in Niagara," offered Kevin Waters, Niagara Sledge Hockey League co-ordinator and Program and Event Manager for ParaSport Ontario. "Awareness of the sport is one of the biggest keys to improving its success. We often hear from individuals in the community, when they first come out, that they had no idea about sledge hockey," noted Waters. More on the NSHL at www.parasportniagara.ca.



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TRACK3 *Celebrates 50 Years*

Track3 is a story of successes realized over more than 50 years. The Ontario Track3 Adaptive Sport Association is a charitable organization that provides ski and snowboard instruction, care and equipment, to children and youth with physical and cognitive disabilities. Participants discover new abilities through the magic of snow sport. Inclusion, ability and freedom are what Track3 is all about.

With the backing of over 300 trained and certified volunteers across Ontario, there is always a need for more to reduce a lengthy waiting list that equals the number of youth being served. Volunteers serve not only as coaches, but support and mentors for Track3 skiers.

Presently, the program hosts approximately 140 students at nine different ski hills across Ontario, with Craighleith Ski Club in Blue Mountain being its flagship. Learn more at <https://www.track3.org>.

FIRST-EVER WOMEN'S BLIND SOCCER TEAM

Soccability Canada has launched a Canadian Women's National Blind Soccer team.

Blind soccer, also known as 5-a-side, is a Paralympic sport played by blind athletes and among the most exciting on the Paralympic program. Extensive development of this sport in recent years has resulted in deeper competition on the men's side and fantastic growth in the female game. Starting international competition in 2023, the program is always on the lookout for new talent. Blind and visually impaired players can reach out for try-out opportunities. Learn more by contacting inquiries@soccability.ca.



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Good luck
at the Games!

NIAGARA FALLS.CA

Adaptive SKATING



BIG BENEFITS from More Ice-Time for All

By Jeff Tiessen

In 2020, with a donation of a sledge from ParaSport® Ontario's Meridian Play to Podium Fund, Char-Lan Skating Club ensured that skaters of all abilities were welcome and able to participate.

A small rural club in Glengarry County, Char-Lan's message of inclusion became clear when the club welcomed its first sledge user, Molly McRae, to the CanSkate club. CanSkate is a learn-to-skate program designed for beginners of all ages. It focuses on fun, participation and basic skill develop-

ment. Its six "stage" badges incorporate skills focusing on the ABC's of skating (agility, balance and control).

The Skate Ontario program, theoretically, welcomes anyone who wants to learn to skate. But in some cases, that is very difficult without the adaptive sports equipment that some need.

Molly thrived with her sledge, having a great time on the ice learning to skate and socializing with her peers alongside Char-Lan's team of instructors, coaches and volunteers.

Thanks to the sledge, the club can welcome many more new participants to skating, hoping to grow the program even bigger in the community. Char-Lan also hopes to

encourage clubs in surrounding areas and across the province to continue to adapt programs and welcome skaters of all levels and abilities into the sport of skating.

And that they did, with Cornwall's Skate Seaway doing just that with the addition of their own Adaptive CanSkate program. Like Char-Lan, Skate Seaway is committed in its mission to nurture an inclusive culture that supports fun and challenge for everyone.

After receiving a sledge for the club from ParaSport Ontario (PO), club president and Skate Canada Coach Pina Gilmour reached back out to PO about a young para athlete whom



she'd been coaching for two years. "From the beginning," she wrote, "I have described Beckett as my little 'go-getter' with a genuine desire to one day be a Paralympian."

In 2016, Beckett was diagnosed with Neurofibromatosis Type 1, a neurological disorder resulting in the bowing of his tibia. He wears an AFO (ankle-foot orthosis) which limits his physical activity and prevents him from wearing regular shoes, boots or skates. But sledge skating is one of the few sports in which the energetic seven-year-old feels capable and confident... a sport he calls his own.

"I would love nothing more than to see this aspiring skater continue on his skating journey," enthused Gilmour. "I'm hoping that ParaSport Ontario will consider Beckett as a candidate for a sledge of his very own. Having his own equipment will give him the opportunity and flexibility to enjoy one of Canada's favourite pastimes whenever he wants."

Gilmour went on to explain: "He'll enjoy time with family and friends on outdoor ponds and backyard rinks; he'll take part in community public skating sessions; he'll accept invites to skating birthday parties; he'll attend school skating field trips; he'll enjoy the bene-

fits of team sport and meet other kids and make new friends; he'll take part in training, beyond learn-to-skate, so he can realize his full athletic potential in a sport he has grown to love."

PO's reply was a resounding "Yes" in keeping with the mission of the Fund exactly. "GO, MERIDIAN PLAY TO PODIUM, GO!... thank you for making dreams come true!" answered Gilmour. "We really appreciate the opportunity and Beckett is looking forward to having his own sledge and skating outdoors this winter with his friends," added his father Bryan Samis.

Scott Rachuk, Skate Ontario's Director of Sport Development, appreciates PO's support as well, particularly in this time of emergence from the pandemic.

"Our members have lost two years of skating, so they're a couple of years behind in their development," he explains. "At the entry level we're thriving, but we have three years of backlog. The importance of CanSkate right now is huge, as it's meant for anybody and everybody to learn basic skating skills. It's all about teaching the skills needed for kids to participate with their friends or family for example. It's a community-based program meant to be inclusive to any and all."

Rachuk acknowledges however, that as much as there is a spirit or attitude of inclusion within CanSkate it's not something that is broadly publicized. "We need to make sure that communities know that there are options for everyone to skate. Once one person is skating with adaptive equipment, it opens the eyes and minds of others. But without that, we don't have many asking for Adaptive CanSkate."

He goes on to say that "this has to be part of our strategic planning and our messaging. We've got to put our money where our mouth is." Rachuk also shared that the toughest part for Skate Ontario is knowing where, or who, to turn to for help.

"From my perspective," he said, "it's how and what do we do? Coach education is important we know, and if we don't have the proper support, it doesn't work well. And kids with disabilities, and their families, need to know that skating is an option. Our role in sport is to get more people participating in skating, and that includes everybody. But we need to be more proactive, and not always so reactive. We know that the more inclusive we can be, the better we are going to be as an organization."

POOLS *to* SCHOOLS



SWIM ONTARIO *is*
Teaching **PARA SWIMMING**

.....

Swim Ontario is committed to building a welcoming and inclusive competitive swimming community. As part of that mission, this provincial sport organization is taking its awareness and education work to schools across Ontario.

Motivated by research that shows that individuals with disabilities most often learn about sports opportunities through word of mouth from friends, family members or medical professionals, Swim Ontario is actively spreading the word about para swimming and lessons that can be learned through participation in sport. One way that Swim Ontario is doing that is its Pools to Schools program.

The Pools to Schools program is a free virtual program that introduces students across Ontario to the thrilling sport of para swimming. Elite para swimmers who have represented Canada at international competitions, including the Paralympic Games and World Championships, share their experiences in the sport and the lessons they have learned – such as perseverance and resilience – with students.

Athlete presenters include two-time Paralympian Abi Tripp and Tyson MacDonald, the first Canadian para relay specialist to compete at the World Para Swimming Championships, both of whom are also ParaSport Ontario Ambassadors.

After a very successful first year for the program, seeing almost 3,000 students introduced to the sport of para swimming, Swim Ontario, with the support of Jumpstart and in partnership with Swimming Canada, is proud to be offering the Pools to Schools program again for the 2022/2023 school year!

Taking advantage of the rise of virtual conferencing seen throughout the pandemic, the Pools to Schools program is reaching students in even the most remote parts of Ontario where exposure to para sport can be limited.

Through the program, students have the opportunity to expand their understanding of sport, disability, and what is possible with hard work and the passionate pursuit of their dreams.

During the presentation, para athletes explain what para swimming is, and how they got involved. They share

their achievements and the lessons that sport has taught them. Students and teachers are always encouraged to ask questions and engage with the athlete throughout the session.

A worksheet for students is provided to teachers as a means of helping start conversations on para swimming and as a tool to focus students' attention during the presentation. In striving to make the program as accessible as possible, presentations and materials are available in English or French, although all presentations are in English.

As a memento of the presentation, every student receives a postcard with a picture of the athlete who presented to their class, along with the athlete's achievements, and information about para swimming in Ontario. The postcards are also a tool for spreading the word on para swimming to parents, siblings and others. They also serve as a marketing opportunity for local swim clubs who are open to working with para swimmers.

The response to the program has been very positive with teachers providing comments including: "This

program exceeded my expectations. There are quite a few students with IEPs in the class so it was even more relatable for them than I expected. We loved learning Tyson's story and I really appreciate that he encouraged students to work hard to achieve their dreams."

Said another teacher: "It was a very valuable opportunity to learn about the importance of hard work despite facing challenges/limitations. There's no limit to any possibility with the right attitude and work ethic. The Q&A format flowed well with information split up between Tyson's professional and personal life, which was especially relatable to my students, many who have varying degrees of challenges themselves (i.e. autism, learning disabilities, auditory processing disorder, etc.)."

The program is also leading to ongoing conversations in classrooms about the power of hard work and achieving goals: "We had a great talk afterwards about how when we come up against challenges, like someone telling us we cannot achieve something or feeling defeated, we can rise up like Jessica did to finish our task or move towards our goal," shared an appreciative teacher.





If interested in having a Pools to Schools presentation for your class or school or to learn more, visit swimontario.com or contact Darda Sales, Para Swimming Development Consultant at paradevelopment@swimontario.com.



PRESENTER BIOS

My name is Abi Tripp, and I am a two-time Paralympian in swimming. I am from Kingston, Ontario, and was born with mild cerebral palsy. I started swimming when I was six years old. I won bronze medals at the 2018 Commonwealth Games and the 2019 World Para Swimming Championships. I joined the Pools to Schools program because it is an excellent way to reach more students and grow awareness of para swimming. At the beginning of each presentation, only some have heard about para swimming; at the end, the students are excited to learn more!



Hello, my name is Tyson MacDonald.

I am a ParaSport® Ontario Ambassador for para swimming, a National Team member having represented Canada at the 2019 Para Pan American Games where I won three medals, and I competed at the 2022 World Para Swimming Championships as Canada's first relay specialist! The Pools to Schools program has given me the honour of sharing my story to hundreds of school-age children across the province about the importance of inclusion during Phys. Ed and recess, dreaming big in life, and most importantly, having FUN in all we do.



LEARN MORE ABOUT PARA SWIMMING AND
OUR POOLS TO SCHOOLS PROGRAM AT
www.swimontario.com/athletes/para-swimming



**CANADA'S NEWEST
FORM OF HOCKEY**

VOLT HOCKEY



Played in a Danish-designed Sport Chair, manipulated by only a joystick, Volt Hockey has become a game-changer in sport, breaking down barriers for youth with physical disabilities.



**"Volt equalizes the
game of hockey for kids
with disabilities."**

Sofia Caldwell from YMCA Middlesex

varietyvillage.ca/volt-hockey/

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POWER PLAY



Photos by Dan Bodanis

FOSTERING FRIENDSHIPS ON AND OFF THE COURT

"I never thought I'd be able to play hockey"... a common sentiment shared by many who try powerhockey for the first time. Like most parasports, powerhockey players and families often experience benefits beyond the sport itself.

Powerhockey is a competitive, action-packed sport that is accessible to individuals with a wide range of disabilities – such as muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy, spina bifida, those with spinal cord injuries, among others. It's a distinctively inclusive sport as many players are physically unable to participate in other more widely-known parasports. And it's one of the few parasports that is accessible to individuals who use a power wheelchair. There's a way for everyone to play, even if it means attaching a stick directly to a wheelchair.





Powerhockey plays off of the rules of ice hockey with some adaptations. There is no icing rule... but there is one for dangerous driving. It is played on a gym floor in power wheelchairs with a floor hockey stick, and a pair of safety glasses!

The sport is also known for its powerful impact on players, meeting and learning from others with similar disabilities. Creating a close community, players get advice and support on a variety of things beyond the game: things like entering post-secondary education, working or volunteering, options for personal care support and living independently, as well as traveling.

Learning tips and tricks from fellow players and families on how to navigate these aspects of life with a disability has empowered many. Seeing others with similar disabilities accomplishing these things motivates players and families to say, "If they can do it, why can't I" or "Why can't my child."

Powerhockey, like many sports, also enables players to develop skills

in teamwork, collaboration and analytical thinking on the court, which are transferable to everyday life too.

One of the biggest benefits to powerhockey is the lifelong friendships that are fostered and the tight-knit community of players, coaches, volunteers, and fans. It's about more than just hockey. Many comment that it is like a second family... their "Powerhockey Family".

POWERHOCKEY IN CANADA

There are several established powerhockey leagues across Canada and many more in early development. PowerHockey Canada is a national parasport organization focused on the growth and development of powerhockey nationwide. Established in 2018, PowerHockey Canada's mission is to enable para-athletes of all abilities who use a power wheelchair to participate in the sport.

It does that by developing and supporting leagues from the local recreational level up to a high-performance national program. Its

management team is player-oriented at its core, comprised of players, coaches and para-sport advocates who demonstrate that success and excellence is not limited by ability.

Each year, regional leagues are invited to send a high-performance team to the PowerHockey Canada Cup to compete and further develop their powerhockey skills. Players get to travel and broaden their powerhockey family, creating new lifelong friends.

PowerHockey Canada also supports the development of Team Canada squads which draw players from across the country to play in international tournaments as far away as Europe and Australia.

During the pandemic, leagues paused recreational seasons and tournaments were deferred to ensure player safety of course. Powerhockey leagues were very cautious in returning to play as many of its players have complex disabilities that involve being immunocompromised. When leagues did return, safety measures were



put into place, such as mandatory vaccination requirements for players, volunteers and spectators, as well as health pre-screens and masking.

To support players in getting their powerhockey fix during this pause in play, PowerHockey Canada created opportunities for connection and continued skill-building. The Power2Play Challenge featured six weeks of skill challenges which players could complete at home. The Inside the Crease Podcast showcased human-interest stories from the powerhockey community, and the PowerHockey Canada Summit, a three-day virtual event, featured a variety of engaging panel discussions on a broad range of powerhockey and parasport topics.

While these initiatives were no substitute for playing powerhockey with teammates, they were a great way to bring the powerhockey and broader parasport community together when it couldn't happen in-person.

GIVE IT A TRY!

While it may feel intimidating at first for some, veteran powerhockey players are quick to advise new participants to “Just come out and try it!” Whether it be playing, coaching, or volunteering, there is a way for everyone to get involved and experience the benefits of this amazing sport!

One of PowerHockey Canada's main goals is to create more leagues across the country. If you're interested in starting a league in your community, PowerHockey Canada has several ways it can support you in doing so.

The future of powerhockey in Canada is bright. It has changed the lives of so many Canadians, which is what fuels PowerHockey Canada to work toward ensuring that para-athletes of all abilities have the opportunity to achieve their goals in the incredible sport of powerhockey!

To learn more, reach out to PowerHockey Canada at www.powerhockeycanada.com.





15 DAYS OF AT THE CANA



From August 6th to 21st, the Niagara Region welcomed more than 5,000 participants to compete in the Niagara 2022 Canada Summer Games. The Canada Games are one of only a few events where athletes with physical disabilities and athletes with intellectual disabilities compete at the same games as able-bodied athletes!

During the 15-day event, ParaSport® Ontario showcased 15 different adaptive sports at the Canada Summer Games festival called Niagara Place. Regional partners like the Brock Niagara Penguins and the Niagara Children's Centre, together with provincial ones, hosted parasport-specific demonstrations. More than 75,000 visitors to Niagara

Place had the chance to experience popular parasports like wheelchair basketball, goalball and sitting volleyball, and up-and-coming ones like paragolf, para-kayak and Volt hockey too. Over 8,000 visitors gave one a try!

ParaSport Ontario also participated in the concurrent Canada Summer Games' 13-for-13 Festival which paired Canada's 13 provinces and territories with Niagara's 12 municipalities (plus a Niagara Region event) in "pop-up" festivals over 13 evenings of the games. ParaSport Ontario partook in most of these events with a parasport activation, hosted by an ambassador and complete with demonstrations and a variety of adapted sports equipment on display.



PARASPORT

DA SUMMER GAMES

“A Rising Tide Lifts All Boats.”

– John F. Kennedy

It was an exciting summer in Niagara. A particularly exciting time for the region’s disability community. Indoors and out, inclusive and accessible places and spaces are more abundant than ever from Grimsby to Fort Erie. And the Niagara ‘22 Canada Summer Games provided a stage to showcase opportunity and inclusivity in parasports across the region.

ParaSport® Ontario’s activation at the Canada Summer Games’ festival – Niagara Place – celebrated parasport excellence. From horse farms to fairways, trails to tracks, and courts to canals, there is a wealth of opportunity for adapted sport and recreation in Niagara... a sport for everyBODY!



The Canada Summer Games legacy contribution to the region’s residents with disabilities was on display at Canada Games Park and other venues. And the games’ incorporation of accessibility as a priority pillar for the event was most significant.

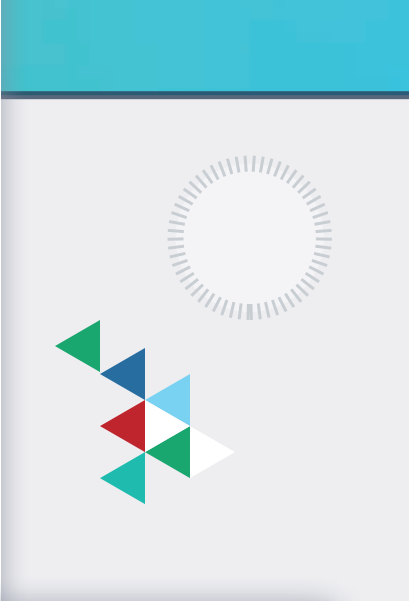
I arrived in Niagara over 30 years ago to begin a career in the social service sector, and at the same time finish one, as I prepared for my third, and last, Paralympic Games. And with the end of that 12-year athletic career, I found new places to play on Niagara’s soccer fields, bike paths and waterways.

I was proud to lead ParaSport Ontario’s activation at the Canada Summer Games. In partnership with people and programs that are leading the way, and with the support of the Ontario Trillium Foundation and the event’s planner AbsoluteXM, ParaSport Ontario and its partners were provided an incomparable platform to promote the growth of adaptive sports and recreation for all.

Collectively, Niagara is establishing itself as a model region of inclusion with respect to adaptive sport, recreation and physical activity. Much to celebrate and much more to come.

Jeff Tiessen
ParaSport Ontario
Managing Director of Special Projects





“With a goal to establish a stronger presence for parasport and our partners, being part of the Canada Summer Games in Niagara was a wonderful opportunity to educate and create parasport awareness for Niagara residents, games participants and spectators. Visitors expressed that they were happy for the opportunity to educate themselves and their children. A Kinesiology professor stated that he had never considered including parasport in his lesson plans before interacting with us at the activation. School teachers and camp leaders were excited that an online parasport resource centre now existed, as they were looking for information to take to their kids.”

Maryann Macharia
ParaSport Ontario Staff



“Thank-you for inviting OVA and our ambassadors to join ParaSport Ontario at the Canada Summer Games to showcase Sitting Volleyball, also known as Para Volleyball! We were busy with families, athletes, visitors, volunteers, and community members and coaches interested in trying the game for the first time... a great opportunity to grow our sport.”

Derek Symonowicz
National Sitting Volleyball Team

“I was following ParaSport Ontario’s social channels during the games and it was amazing to see all the different athletes you had engage with participants over the two weeks of the games!”

Alexis Kilroy, Member Engagement Strategist, Meridian™



"Big congratulations on a successful 15-day event at Niagara Place at the games. I would like to thank ParaSport Ontario for inviting Special Olympics Ontario to participate as a demonstration partner to showcase Bocce. We had Special Olympics athletes come from Port Colborne, Welland, St. Catharines and West Niagara (which includes Grimsby, Lincoln and other neighbouring communities), who demonstrated Bocce skills throughout the day. It was a very positive and empowering experience for our athletes. Thank-you for advocating and cultivating inclusion."

Pratima Bhatt
Special Olympics – West Niagara

"Thank-you for inviting Variety – the Children's Charity (Ontario)/ Variety Village to join ParaSport Ontario at the Canada Summer Games to showcase VOLT Hockey! Our partnership with the Niagara Children's Centre provided a great opportunity to demonstrate VOLT in the community. We had many families, athletes, visitors, volunteers, community members and coaches interested in trying the game for the first time. I've received inquiries from participants and coaches who tried VOLT in Niagara about getting involved. We appreciate being included in promoting sport for everyBODY! A BIG thank-you to the ParaSport Ontario team."

Archie Allison
Director of Access, Variety Ontario

"This event felt like the closest we've been to true inclusion! It didn't just demonstrate adaptive equipment and sport to able-bodied individuals, but it engaged Niagara's community of people with disabilities too."

Kevin Waters
ParaSport Ontario Staff





"So many parents commented on how happy they were to see us there, representing sport for all abilities. Athletes with disabilities who were participating in the games were grateful that we were there too."

Morgan Hawley
ParaSport Ontario Staff



"Ontario Cycling was pleased to join ParaSport Ontario at Niagara Place to showcase the exciting sport of Para Cycling! Our combined efforts with Niagara Penguins made for a fun day for folks having the opportunity to try out their sprint ability on a handcycle. We made connections in the community and it was a great day spreading awareness of Para Cycling and the opportunities for anybody to ride a bike. Thank-you to the ParaSport Ontario staff for being fun and positive advocates for Para Cycling."

Amber Hutchinson, M.Sc. CSCS



"Thank-you ParaSport Ontario for inviting Ontario Blind Sports Association to be part of the activation at the Canada Summer Games! We had a ton of fun introducing Goalball and 5-a-Side Soccer to the community. Thank-you for the opportunity to raise awareness about blind sports and foster new partnerships."

Randa Gohary, Executive Director
Ontario Blind Sports Association

"The ParaSport Ontario activations at the 13-for-13 Festival were nothing less than a success with great connections made in each host municipality. The event staff at each event was quick to give ParaSport as much space as needed, and shout-outs to visitors to try a parasport with us. Wheelchair basketball was always popular, and sledge hockey too, but the racing wheelchair on rollers got the most attention. Overall, kids just loved to play, and so did a lot of adults too, and parents were most often interested in the adaptive sports equipment. And they used this opportunity to educate their kids about disability and sport. Many commented on their appreciation that parasport was represented at the festivals."

Mitchell Tiessen
ParaSport Ontario Ambassador



"A big thank-you to ParaSport Ontario for welcoming Swim Ontario to the Canada Summer Games booth to showcase Para Swimming in Ontario. As a Canada Games Alum, it was a rewarding experience to connect with other athletes from a variety of sports, show off my 2017 medals, sign autographs, and talk briefly about my career in para swimming. We connected with many athletes, parents, coaches, volunteers, and spectators about what Para Swimming is and its integration into provincial and national events. A thank-you to the entire ParaSport Ontario team for making this event a major success for ALL sports to take part in. Your hospitality, support and passion for parasport was on full display."

Tyson MacDonald, Paralympic Swimmer



Niagara Place ■ Sport & Attendance

OPENING DAY ■ Saturday, August 6th	1,750
GOALBALL & 5-A-SIDE SOCCER ■ Sunday, August 7th	3,100
PARA SWIMMING ■ Monday, August 8th	3,250
PARA ATHLETICS ■ Tuesday, August 9th	3,175
PARA CYCLING ■ Wednesday, August 10th	3,490
PARAGOLF ■ Thursday, August 11th	3,625
BOCCIA ■ Friday, August 12th	4,926
SITTING VOLLEYBALL ■ Saturday, August 13th	3,746
SPECIAL OLYMPICS ■ Sunday, August 14th	12,750
PARA CANOE/KAYAK ■ Monday, August 15th	3,194
VOLT HOCKEY ■ Tuesday, August 16th	7,361
WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL ■ Wednesday, August 17th	11,300
ADAPTIVE FITNESS ■ Thursday, August 18th	3,468
CHALLENGER BASEBALL ■ Friday, August 19th	4,322
SLEDGE HOCKEY ■ Saturday, August 20th	7,975
CLOSING DAY ■ Sunday, August 21st	2,165

► **Total Attendance ■ 79,597**

Thank-You to our Participating Partners

- Athletics Ontario
- Brock Niagara Penguins
- Canoe/Kayak Ontario
- Niagara Children's Centre
- Ontario Blind Sports Association
- Ontario Cerebral Palsy Sports Association
- Ontario Cycling Association
- Ontario Volleyball Association
- ParaGolf Ontario
- Resolution Fitness
- South Niagara Canoe Club
- Special Olympics Ontario
- Stoney Creek Athletics
- Swim Ontario
- Variety Ontario

Thank-You to our Funding Partners



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**Ontario Parasport
Collective**

MERIDIAN FUNDRAISER

Pedals for ParaSport

Throughout the Niagara 2022 Canada Summer Games, the Meridian Health for Wealth Activation encouraged participants to hop on a stationary bicycle for a short race to raise funds for one of three organizations, ParaSport Ontario being one of them. Participants pedaled their way to raise close to \$10,000 for the three charities!



**WORTH
NOTING**

Meridian's First Play to Podium Recipient

Meridian is helping ParaSport Ontario support members of the disability community by getting them “in the game” with the adaptive sports equipment they need. The first equipment recipient from the newly-branded Meridian Play to Podium Fund was Julian Caverley.

Julian received his own hockey sled at the 2022 Niagara Games' Niagara-on-the-Lake (NOTL) Torch Run. A participant in the NOTL Torch Run himself, Julian began playing wheelchair basketball at age 11 with the Brock Niagara Penguins. In the winter of 2021, he found his passion for playing on the ice. He joined ParaSport Ontario's new Niagara Sledge Hockey League.



“We are so pleased to be the title sponsor of the Meridian Play to Podium Fund,” said Wade Stayzer, Meridian's Chief Operating Officer. “The Fund is for Ontarians with physical disabilities who want to be active, and I was so proud to present Julian with his very own sled.”

**To find a sport, club, ambassador, expert or coach near you,
visit <https://parasportontario.ca>.**



Full Swing

Celebrating Five Years of the Para Pro-Am Golf Tournament

By Joe Millage

The mid-summer weather was near perfect as were the course conditions at Lebovic Golf Club in Aurora. The competition at ParaSport™ Ontario's 5th Annual Para Pro-Am Golf Tournament was formidable amongst the 26 teams, led by 26 PGA of Canada professionals. Twenty-nine paragolfers – including four top-ranked Canadians – and 75 corporate players made for a very special event. The day, however, was really more about creating opportunities for others than personal victory.

Adding to the purpose and pageantry of the day, a sincere and enthusiastic welcome message was received from the Honourable Raymond Cho, MPP, and Ontario's Minister of Seniors and Accessibility.

And with thanks to ParaSport® Ontario's friends at WORKBAY, participants were moved by an exclusive interview by Paralympian and CBC commentator Rob Snoek with two of the world's premier Special Olympic golfers Tess Trojan and Amy Bockerstette. Tess is a two-time World Champion and her friend Amy is known for her amazing "I Got This" video witnessed around the world in which she plays the famed Stadium Hole with Gary Woodland (see the Para Pro-Am interview here: <https://vimeo.com/workbay/review/710506391/cafe5c2cdd>).

Club owner Dr. Wolf Lebovic welcomed players to his course at the first tee, including the Honourable Raymond Cho, MPP, and Canada's top paragon golfer

Kurtis Barkley. Also part of the celebrity tee-off were former North American one-armed golf champions Steve McCowan and Ken Mulgrew and Canada's best female paragon golfer Natasha Stasiuk, playing on the all-female team from Durham Medical with pro Vicky Appleton.

The tournament's Honourary Chair, Rocky LoFranco, co-Chairs Bernie Gluckstein and Tim Christie, and ParaSport Ontario's (PO) new Executive Director James Murphy and staff Emily Blackborow and Kevin Waters, were all on hand to greet guests and gift supporters with apparel from event sponsor Levelwear.

Team Westlake, featuring para-ice hockey legend Greg "Captain Canada" Westlake, Jim Westlake, Ernie Murdoch, Michael Lenart and pro Brian Cvetkovic of Glen Abbey Golf Club, took the tournament crown with a -16 (by retrogression). Second place was secured by the ParaGolf Ontario Team, followed by Team FoodDudes capturing the third place spot.

Team Associum's Adrian Johnson just missed a "hole in one" leaving the group with a four-inch tap-in for birdie on the 16th hole, and earning them a special prize pack sponsored by Golf Canada. Recognized with on-course signage, dozens of other prizes from Wine OnLine, FoodDudes, and other generous supporters were up for grabs.

With the mission of providing support to all members of the disability community – regardless of age or stage in life – to participate in sport



Photos courtesy of Michael Schneider

Thank-You to Teams and Sponsors

30 Forensic Engineering	King International Advisory Group
ADL	KRA Health Solutions
ADS Forensics	Lebovic Golf Club
Alleles	Levelwear
Arnts the Landscape Supplier	LiUNA 837
Associum	Lofranco Corriero
BloombergSen Investment Partners	Personal Injury Lawyers
Bridgepoint Financial Services	McKellar Structures
Caldwell Securities	Meridian
Carbon Building Group	MNP
CBA Future Care	NeuroChangers
Connor Clark and Lund	Össur Canada
Private Capital	ParaGolf Ontario
Diamond and Diamond Lawyers	PBO Group
DriveLab Inc.	PGA of Canada RBC Scramble
Durham Medical	Rotary Club of Whitby
EPS Settlements Group of Canada	theScore
FoodDudes	Seaquist & Partners
Gluckstein Lawyers	Sunrise Medical
Goldstein Financial Consultants	TCL Economic Validation Experts
Golf Canada	Toshiba
Graziella Fine Jewellery	VGA Vivek Gupta
Integra Investigation Services Ltd.	Westlake Family
John Oakes	WineOnline

programs and activities to enhance quality of life, the tournament once again hit the mark for golfers.

In its five years in play, the Para Pro-Am Golf Tournament has had an impact on individuals and communities across Ontario with more than \$500,000 raised. That value is even greater when considering the support of companies like Sunrise Medical, Össur Canada, PBO Group, Durham Medical, and Unique Inventions, all of which donate adaptive sport equipment to get Ontarians with disabilities "back in the game".

And what's more, the 2022 event received additional support from Gluckstein Lawyers and Lebovic Golf Club to create a new event for paragolfers which saw Chris Wills breaking par with an amazing 69 gross, and ParaGolf Ontario President Jerry Brandt winning the net, and Tess Trojan taking the women's gross and net titles.

Thank-you to Dr. Wolf Lebovic and his enthusiastic team at Lebovic Golf Club for hosting the 5th Annual Para Pro-Am Golf Tournament.



A PROUD SUPPORTER OF PARASPORT® ONTARIO



At Lofranco Corriero Personal Injury Lawyers, personal injury litigation is part of our family tradition. The founder of our firm, Rocky Lofranco, has spent his entire legal career advocating for the rights of innocent accident victims. His vision and leadership makes him one of the major contributors to the personal injury sector in Canada. For over 40 years, Rocky Lofranco has established an outstanding record of settling complex and challenging cases. Today, he continues to build his legacy with a talented team of personal injury lawyers who honour his dedication and passion for success.



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More About the Para Pro-Am Tournament

Why is this golf event so important? This tournament is all about inclusion. It's about creating a welcoming attitude, fair competition and a high-quality event with a legacy



that provides opportunities for everyBODY to participate in sport activities of their choice and in their community.

Part of its uniqueness is the inclusion of professionals from the PGA of Canada. The model is to normalize inclusion at the highest level of the sport so that fostering a welcoming attitude of acceptance at all levels will follow.

And it's working. Brock Potter for example, the tournament's youngest paragolfer, now competes on his Sinclair High School team in

Whitby. The tournament provided a pathway for Brock, a "stepping stone" of excellence put in place by Kurtis Barkley, Natasha Stasiuk, Tess Trojan and many others, including the volunteers at ParaGolf Ontario.

It also includes the influence of

Kevin Thistle, CEO of the PGA of Canada, and Para Pro-Am volunteer each year. Our contingent of golf professionals is led by Reggie Millage, Head Coach of the Golf Association of Ontario, and Ken Tarling, who assembled the accomplished group that included legends such as Gar Hamilton, Rick Willan, Piero Poletto, Dave Wettlaufer, Vicki Appleton and Brian Cvetovic who anchored the winning Westlake Team.

And of course, Dr. Wolf Lebovic himself, a renowned builder of homes by profession and an impact-

ful builder of community at heart. His Foundation built a golf course for the purpose of strengthening organizations that serve others, with a desire to help those who are willing to work to help themselves.

Charities that partner with Lebovic Golf Club enjoy a premier course, exceptional food service and unique opportunities to play again and again.

For ParaSport Ontario and golfers with disabilities, the partnership has created phenomenal benefits that include participation in world class events, and informing corporate and community leaders who support opportunities that include everyBODY.

Thanks to the generosity of Dr. Wolf Lebovic, the Para Pro-Am has provided more than \$250,000 in equipment and program support to Ontarians with disabilities.

It is these, and other, parasport champions who have contributed to the event's legacy... one that enhances access and inclusion in communities across the province.



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ParaSport® Ontario's Resource Hub

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- Find a Club
- Ask an Expert
- Meet an Ambassador
- Contact a Sport Leader

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Coaches and Volunteers!*

*News, Research, Policies, Community Services
and more.*

..... Visit <https://parasportontario.ca>

Supporting athletes wherever their dreams take them



We are proud to support athletes and build communities
as diverse as the clients we serve.





Transforming **COAC**



Quality Programming Starts with Values and Inclusion

By Vicki Keith

“Never bend down to speak to a child. Stand up tall and make them look up at you. That’s how you get respect!”

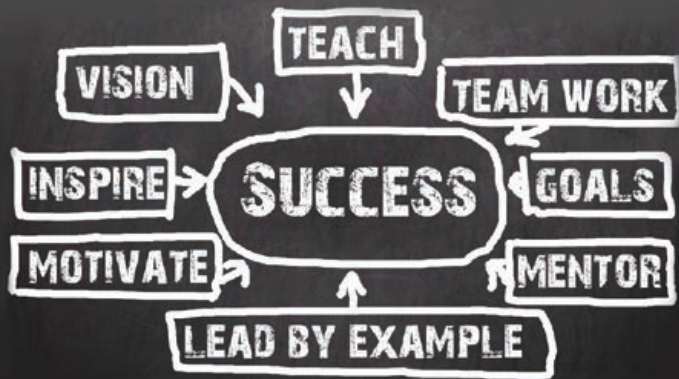
“Never let an athlete call you by your first name. Make them call you Ms. Keith. As a female coach, that’s the only way you will ever get respect.”

These were two of the first pieces of advice that I received as a coach and these two pieces of advice helped me create my own path... because I couldn’t abide by either one of these messages.

When we consider quality programming, we have to start with ourselves. We need to identify who we want to be and what our goals are as a coach, leader, instructor or mentor. Our values, goals, perceptions, energy level, behaviours, communication skills and passion, all impact the people with whom we work.

Choosing a transformational style of coaching or leadership means that we have taken all of these considerations – and likely others – and created the best version of ourselves. It’s almost like we are on stage for the time we are coaching. We are being the best us, as we engage, support and direct our athletes’ process. We choose our words carefully, use positive humour, identify troubling behaviours and gently transform them into more desirable patterns. We lead by example.

HING



Transformational coaches teach life lessons through teamwork, pride, responsibility, hard work, respect, and sportsmanship. We develop individual and team skills to help build a stronger team. We provide opportunities for athletes to take ownership, by making decisions with regard to the team and their individual growth. We are positive role models who offer constructive guidance and support. We welcome interactions with parents and family members. And, we understand, appreciate, and accept the responsibility as we shape a young athlete's career, as well as their life.

Once we know who we are, we then need to consider what we need to create a healthy sport environment. We identify our priorities and the messages we want to reinforce.

As a coach, my goal is to show my athletes that I believe in them and their abilities. I work to evaluate their perceptions of their abilities by identifying their strengths and then coach to those strengths.

I help athletes build a strong, positive sense of who they are by allowing them to take ownership in their process, giving them choices and respecting their decisions, and letting them engage and problem-solve in all aspects of their sport. I encourage them to experiment to find solutions, mentally, physically and emotionally.



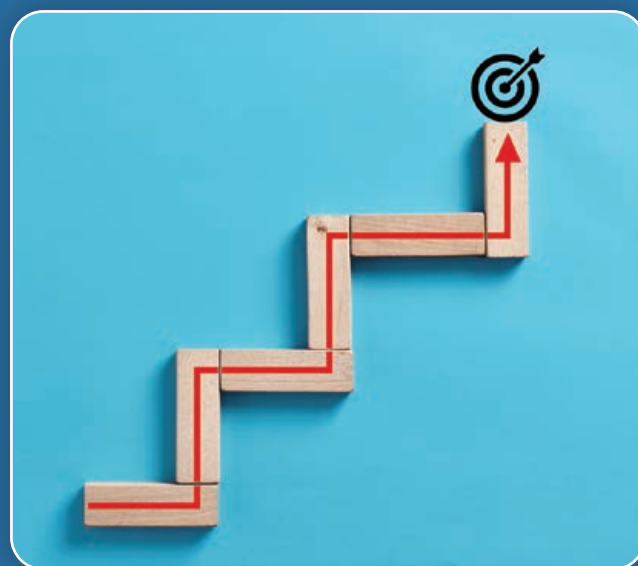
Redefining Failure

I always try to help athletes understand that just because they didn't achieve the expected outcome, or the one they hoped for, it doesn't mean they have failed. It just means they aren't there yet. It's time to regroup, rebuild and try again.



Setting Achievable but Challenging Goals

Goals should be challenging but achievable. In the beginning, the gaps should be small and as confidence grows, the gaps can become wider.



Building a Feeling of Family

By encouraging team activities, sharing responsibilities, showing respect and creating opportunities for mentorship, a feeling of community or family is established.



Creating a Welcoming and Inclusive Environment

Greet every person every day in a way that they know you believe they matter. Make eye contact, and ask them about their day. Join them for a minute to live in their world so they know you see them and that it's important to you that they are there. Acknowledge what each athlete offers the team and optimize their talents and skills. Encourage participants to support their teammates and their efforts. Support peer relationships on and off the field.

Focusing on the Positives

When things fall apart, focus on the lessons learned rather than what went wrong.



Developing Strong Relationships

Get to know your athletes. Talk about their goals. Be an ear if they have a challenge. In sport, we make the mistake of thinking winning is a priority... winning is fun, but we need to acknowledge all of the important things that we get from sport and not focus on just one measurement of success. It is fun to win, but other aspects of sport are just as important or even more important than winning.

Do you remember why you first got involved in sport? Fun. Friends. Freedom. Independence. Winning probably wasn't even in your top three reasons. Skill development and improvement actually rank higher than winning.

We need to design our programs to be fun and to celebrate friendship. We need to provide young people with what they want from participation in sport. We need to help them feel good about themselves and have pride in being part of their team. And we need to address their needs, physically, mentally and emotionally.

Sport is the tool we use to teach life lessons and to help young people experience a positive, supportive and safe environment to explore their abilities, take calculated risks and to challenge themselves to reach new heights. Once we have a strong, positive environment and our youth are learning and thriving, we need to help them identify personal and team goals, and work towards achieving them.

Ginormous, Terrifying, Mindboggling Goals

Attainable goals are sometimes too safe, and dreams are too far away. We need another rank of goals. I call them GTMGs – ginormous, terrifying, mind-boggling goals! When we apply this type of goal to a group it draws those people together with a common purpose and helps them identify and set a larger-than-life goal. Then we break that GTMG down into smaller manageable steps and work together as a supportive team to knock down barriers and overcome perceived limitations until the impossible becomes possible and a GTMG is achieved.

GTMGs help everyone involved internalize that anything is possible when we work together.

The Variety Village Flames will hold their first 24-Hour Relay this season since 2001. We will work together as a team, to fundraise and achieve this goal. Older athletes will take extra shifts so the younger athletes can get a bit of extra sleep but everyone will be part of achieving this initial GTMG.

A few years ago, I presented a GTMG to a team that I coached at the Y in Kingston. We called it the Y Knot Marathon. “Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow” was our theme.

As the athlete of “yesterday”, I swam from Scarborough to Port Hope, about 80 km. The athletes of “today”, sisters Jenna and Natalie Lambert, cycled side-by-side from Port Hope to Brockville – 240 km – where the athletes of “tomorrow” ran, walked and

wheeled to Ottawa, another 120 km.

By breaking this GTMG down into small, achievable steps we achieved the goal and raised some much-needed money for our program.

Jenna and Natalie went on to achieve their own personal goals. Jenna became the first woman with a disability to swim across Lake Ontario, and sister Natalie swam across Lake Erie. Another participant, Abi Tripp, achieved her GTMG of competing at the Paralympics. There were many other less “flashy” goals achieved as families identified the possibilities in their future rather than the challenges or roadblocks to their dreams.

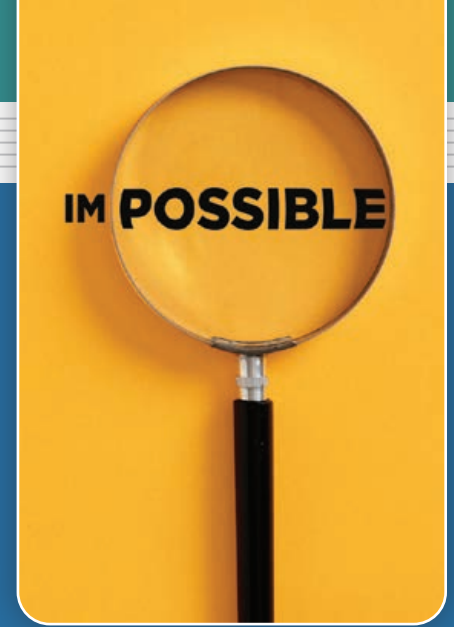
When Jenna was 10 years old she said to an audience: “Swimming has given me a chance to build up courage which I had hidden inside for such a long time. Being part of the swim team has allowed me to not disapprove of my disability.”

After years of training, Jenna climbed from Lake Ontario having swum 34 kilometres in 32 hours and 18 minutes. She looked out at the thousands of people and members of the media who had come to witness history and said: “The only disability is a bad attitude!” After witnessing GTMGs being achieved, Jenna understood that a door was open to anyone who was willing to walk through it.

“A child’s life is like a piece of paper on which every person leaves a mark.” I have this Chinese proverb

Lakes over a two-month period and for being the only person to complete the 104-km double crossing of Lake Ontario.

But Vicki didn’t start life destined to be a marathon swimmer. “My life started as a young person who was kicked out of ballet,” she recalls, “and who was poor at every sport I participated in. I was always picked last for team sports.” For Vicki, her marathon



hanging over my desk. I read it every day before I walk out onto the pool deck, and on emotionally challenging days I read it two or three times. It reminds me every day that: what I say matters; how I say it matters; my body language matters; my energy level matters; speaking to every participant matters; showing respect and creating a welcoming environment, and inspiring, laughing and caring, all matter.

We need to create a safe, welcoming and exciting environment regardless of what challenges a young person faces in a day. When they step onto our field of play they must feel welcomed, appreciated and lifted up, so they can see their potential.

When we have positive training environments, led by supportive, caring, passionate coaches, it is so much easier for participants to see and believe in their full potential. With value-based programs run by transformational leadership, each child will see their potential and reach new heights in sport and in life.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Vicki Keith was described as an unlikely athlete, not apt to succeed in any sport. But she refused to accept the negative comments about her abilities, and today is the most successful marathon swimmer in the history of the sport with an unprecedented sixteen world records. Her most recognized accomplishments include becoming the first person to swim across all five Great

swimming career was never about breaking records. It was always about doing what others thought to be impossible and she shares that personal mantra with youth who aspire to be like her, especially kids with disabilities in her swim programs.



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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
- OBSA High Performance Camp
- Regionals Open Goalball Tournament
- Provincial/Eastern Canadian Goalball Championship
- Equipment Loaning Program
- OBSA Sports Days
- OBSA Outreach Programs



OFF-COURSE *with* CROSS COUNTRY

Equipment Challenges and Solutions

By Jennifer Nieson, XCSO Para Nordic Lead

Ready to try seated, or kneeling, snow or road skis? Thanks to a Canadian Tire Jumpstart Community Development grant, and Spike, Cross Country Ski Ontario (XCSO) has them.

Photo Courtesy of Christina Pictor

The need for this equipment was identified through a strategic program review by XCSO and Run Fast Consulting. Focused on ways to grow the para-Nordic program into something province-wide, XCSO also wants para-athletes to participate in the sport of cross-country skiing at grass-roots to high-performance levels. A big barrier to this is availability of equipment for para-athletes.

Managing the equipment is one of the primary challenges facing the para-Nordic program. There are many considerations: from access to reliable equipment, supporting those who are just entering the sport, and resources required to build or modify equipment for individual athletes at each competition or training session.

Here's what that can look like. Last year, one of these challenges was on full display when a provincial team member and para-athlete leader was detained because of equipment circumstances at a National training camp and competition. After a three-hour flight, the athlete sat and waited in the day lodge for another three hours while equipment was adjusted. In the meantime, standing and seated skiers from other countries, with fully customizable equipment, were quickly fastening their gear and joining the training session. Ultimately, because of this difficulty with equipment the athlete missed the opportunity to fully participate in the training session.

Those involved in para-Nordic experience other barriers related to equipment as well. In many situations, parents, athletes and coaches are forced to tinker with equipment and modify it by stacking pieces from various manufacturers. With the best of intentions of course, the flip-side is that by modifying this equipment for affordability and accessibility there are implications and responsibilities of liability that are impacted. Add to that, once modified for a particular



athlete the equipment can then become obsolete and not able to be used by others.

The Jumpstart funding provided to XCSO has afforded the XCSO Para Nordic program the opportunity to partner with Exero Technologies, an innovative company headquartered in Norway. Exero joins the community of parasport equipment manufacturers with its Spike line of para-Nordic products.

Both the company and the product were born out of a student project. A group of fourth-year engineering students from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology were tasked with building a piece of adaptive sports equipment to enable multi-sport para seated-athletes to train.

The students came up with the Spike seated road ski, comprised of a lightweight frame and encompassing fully customizable features. Exero uses 3D printing to manufacture its adjustable pieces and works with athletes to print custom parts as required. Customized features include memory seat cushions, seat angle and height adjusters, leg extension bars, suspension, neoprene strapping systems, back support, handbrakes,

and off-road tires for different types of terrain.

The keen group became business owners when encouraged by their professor to launch their product in the Norwegian market. Since inception in 2016, Exero has added three new products to support para-athletes, one being a kneeling product for both snow and trails. Exero Technologies worked with Austrian company Fischer, one of the industry's top ski manufacturers, to identify the type of ski that would work best with Spike products.

Today, Exero Technologies has several ambassadors, including the top Norwegian sit skiers of course, who are using the Spike products at the Paralympic and World Cup level. For XCSO, the equipment will be key to the growth of its sport and the provincial para-Nordic program. Establishing a fleet of Spike seated and kneeling products pushes the XCSO Para Nordic program forward with our goal of developing a sustainable province-wide program.

For more information on para-Nordic skiing in Ontario or the Spike sit ski products please visit: xcskiontario.ca.



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stop playing
because we
grow old.

*We grow old
because
we stop
playing.”*

– Anonymous



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