



42 sailors meet in 'best ever' Mobility Cup

DSA Vancouver plays host to 16th annual event for competitors from around the world

Brilliant blue skies, stiff breezes and warm hospitality greeted 42 competitors from around the globe for the 16th annual Mobility Cup, Sept. 10-15, in Vancouver.

The event was hosted by the Disabled Sailing Association of BC (DSA BC) and Royal Vancouver Yacht Club, with racing on English Bay.

The annual regatta is North America's flagship for sailors with disabilities, and this year it took an international flavour with six countries represented: Canada, USA, Australia, New Zealand, Hungary and England.

The regatta gives adaptive sailors a chance for serious competition, but is also a social event. Many competitors find the event life-changing and are inspired to start new disabled sailing programs or introduce best practices in their local clubs.

Many people remain unaware that adaptive boats mean sailing can be both accessible and inclusive – participants are not segregated according to the nature of their disability.

The Mobility Cup utilizes the Vancouver-designed Martin 16 sloop, which allows multi-level control. High-level quadriplegics use mouth-operated Sip 'n' Puff interfaces



Photo: Brian Dennehy

Heading Downwind: Rod Mack (42) of Victoria chases fellow Silver Fleet competitors Mark Godfrey (70) of Dallesport, WA, and Peter Magee (81) of Queensland, Australia.

connected to power assisted steering.

This means that people with varying levels of physical ability can compete on a level playing field, with the only distinction being sailing experience – novices to the Silver Fleet and experienced racers to the Gold Fleet.

Vancouver Mayor Sam Sullivan – a

quadriplegic as a result of a 1979 skiing accident – officially opened events on Monday, Sept. 11. Sullivan, who formed DSA BC in 1989 and organized the first Mobility Cup in 1991, told the competitors his goal always was to make sailing inclusive and accessible so it would be “an example and an inspiration for everything

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Gardening group is branching out: DIGA just keeps on growing



Photo: Iris Cheung

Growing Ambition: DIGA members making planters at July's workshop.

The Disabled Independent Gardeners Association (DIGA) is the fastest growing offshoot of the Sam Sullivan Disability Foundation.

DIGA presented six workshops between July and September this year, and will keep the momentum going through fall and winter.

Over the summer, members visited an organic vegetable garden, a nursery and a greenhouse, and were involved in projects including making planters and flower arranging. There was also a Victorian high tea, held in Stanley Park, in August, to bring members, supporters and funders together.

Program coordinator Betty Cheung said: “We do it simply because people enjoy it. It's as important to our members as music is to musicians.

“They all have their own gardens. It might be something quite modest on a balcony, but they are growing things. They are involved. It's a rewarding pastime.”

DIGA will introduce two new aspects: a one-on-one volunteer program to allow members to develop a relationship with gardening experts, and the creation of specialized assistive devices to make all types of gardening more accessible to people with disabilities.

The next two DIGA workshops for 2006 are: Holiday Wreath Making: Round House, Vancouver, Nov. 30; and Festive Centerpiece: Queen's Park, New Westminster, Dec. 15.

Places must be booked in advance. Contact Betty Cheung at 604-688-6464 ext. 106 or bcheung@disabilityfoundation.org.

Disability News in Brief

A high note

Musicians with disabilities are being sought by Vancouver Adaptive Music Society (VAMS) to appear on a forthcoming CD release. The group is putting together an awareness raising compilation slated for national release. Info: Conrad Burek at 604-688-6464 ext. 126 or Conrad@disabilityfoundation.org.

Tetra volunteer honored

Tetra Vancouver volunteer Harry Hardy received the British Columbia Community Achievement Award from premier Gordon Campbell and Lt. Gov. Iona Campagnolo in April. Keith Mitchell, chair of the British Columbia Achievement Foundation, stated: "Harry has developed and built more than 175 assistive devices, which has increased independence and self-sufficiency for disabled people throughout the world."

Canadian honor

It was Tetra Vancouver volunteer Jay Drew's turn for recognition in May. Drew was honored with a Caring Canadian Award by Canadian Governor General Michaelle Jean. Premier Gordon Campbell praised him as "a very worthy recipient" due to his 15 years' work with the society. "The unique tools and personal installation service that you provide to the physically challenged have really made a difference in the lives of those that you have helped," added Campbell.

TrailRider rides on

One of the new Black Diamond TrailRiders is currently being operated in Edmonton Alberta – the first of this new improved batch to leave BC. The latest TrailRider developed by BCMOS is at the University of Alberta's Steadward Centre for Personal and Physical Achievement, which is piloting a program to help people with significant physical disabilities gain access to the wilderness. This is a second TrailRider for the program.

Sailing options covered

The Disabled Sailing Association of BC unveiled its newest modification in May, a special holder that allows ventilator-dependent quadriplegics to sail. The device, designed by DSA and Tetra volunteer David Graham makes the association's adaptive sailing programs even more inclusive.

Meet and greet

A networking event brought together entrepreneurial members of ConnectTra with employers, Oct. 19 at Roundhouse Community Arts & Recreation Centre, Vancouver. The event was held the highlight the variety of employment-related skills held by people with significant physical disabilities.



Photo: BCMOS

Trailblazers: Sherpas and hiker Ken Quayle negotiating tough terrain on this year's Access Challenge.

Access Challenge: Six teams of hikers and Sherpas fight their way to mountaintop

The "challenge" was back into this year's Access Challenge, as six teams of hikers and Sherpas fought their way to the peak of Tetrahedron Provincial Park.

Sponsored by B.C. Mobility Opportunities Society (BCMOS), the adventure was a test of endurance and a perfect testing ground for the new Black Diamond model TrailRider. It was held August 11-13.

Coordinated by former BCMOS summer employee, Jordan Kerton, the 2006 Access Challenge once again featured steep mountainous terrain, a final-day "zip line" creek crossing, and two nights of outdoor, wilderness camping. Approximately 40 volunteers accompanied this year's six main participants to make it one of the best-ever Access Challenge events.

This year's principal hikers included BCMOS board member and Access Challenge veteran, Alexis Chicoine, along with two returning hikers from last year's event, James Willetts and Cheryl Hutchinson. Three first-time Access Challenge participants included Star Trickey of North Vancouver, Jack Levesque of Vancouver, and Ken Quayle of Gibsons.

Participant James Willetts, a quadriplegic, said the going was tough but the event was life-changing.

"One of the reasons I went was to show people that it's possible to go out and do everything that I used to be able to do," he said. "And to show myself, too. I love the outdoors. I used to do a lot of hiking, when I was able-bodied.

"It was a bigger challenge than I had

thought. I nearly called it off during the first day, but then the adrenalin kicked in – it was like, I'm climbing up a mountain! It was pure adrenalin after that and nothing could stop me."

Tetrahedron Provincial Park is located north and east of Sechelt on the Sunshine Coast, and features a number of pristine mountain lakes and spectacular views that are only visible via steep, rocky trails. Hoping to reach the 1,800-metre peak of Mt. Steele on the first day, the six teams ran out of both daylight and steam and were content to set up camp at the lower McNair cabin.

Day two featured treks throughout the park to Edwards Lake and McNair Lake, with the teams again overnighting at the McNair cabin. The trek down was highlighted by a zip line across a small canyon and creek, provided by members of the North Shore Search and Rescue team.

"The hike started off difficult. . . and then got tougher," laughed Willetts, 37. "It was a real challenge."

He added that he could not truly express his gratitude to the people that made the hike possible, especially Jordan Kerton.

Two key participants in Access Challenge 2006 were Sherpas Wade Lander and Glenn Harrison. Both played integral roles in the design, development and testing of the new Black Diamond TrailRider. Feedback received from both the hikers with disabilities and their Sherpa teammates will lead to further refinements on the access vehicle over the coming months.



James Sanders and his brace...



The brace and costume go on...



And James takes flight. . . thanks to Tetra

Photos: Realwheels Society

Tetra engineers enable actor to realize his vision and take to the sky! Groundbreaking performance reaches new heights

Tetra projects have been helping people with disabilities reach new heights for many years, but one recipient is quite literally head and shoulders over the rest.

James Sanders, a Vancouver actor and playwright who just happens to be quadriplegic, will see his most important work, *Skydive*, premiere in January. The script requires him and co-star Bob Frazer to spend 75 minutes soaring through the air.

In the play, two brothers connect with each other through a series of dreams after a skydiving accident. But in order for it to work, James needed to fly.

He had the vision of utilizing the magic of ES Instruments, the special cranes invented by BC dance pioneer Sven Johansson. These allow three-dimensional choreography, with the performer looping on a 16-foot boom that stands on a six-foot-high fulcrum.

However, these require the artist to exhibit a wide range of physical mobility and pretty much balance at the end of the boom. If Sanders was to fly, he needed to be held firmly in place.

So G.F. Strong Rehabilitation Centre

physiotherapist Darryl Caves, and orthotists Patrick O'Brien and Jeff MacDonald-Bain cast James in his ideal position, and Tetra engineers David Stubbs, Karen Ho, and Jay Drew constructed a fiberglass shell to hold him. This will be hidden from the audience by his costume.

The end result is that Sanders will hover above the stage, his wheelchair gone and his disability masked.

"There are a multitude of negative assumptions about disability out there," Sanders observes. "Masking and revealing the wheelchair can be a very powerful tool in communicating around those ideas."

"We wanted to make a subtle statement about disability, and the capacity of people with disabilities, not hit people over the head with it. Whatever they take away from the show will be truer to life and more authentic than anything they will come across in the mainstream media."

As a working actor and producer with a disability, he is painfully aware of just how insulting the mainstream can be.

"The majority of the roles I've read were insultingly inaccurate portrayals

of what it means to live with disability," explained Sanders.

"In real life, people in chairs are teachers, doctors, welders, air-traffic controllers, you name it. But we rarely get a chance to play those roles unless the script explicitly says 'teacher, doctor, or welder in a wheelchair.' So the audience gets a skewed picture of what people in chairs can do."

Sanders began theatre training at 19. He broke his neck halfway through the first year of his studies, becoming a C5-6 quadriplegic. After a year in rehab, he got back in the saddle and carried on with his training, graduating with a BFA in Theatre from Simon Fraser University.

James, a new member of the Tetra Society of North America board of directors, will give Tetra funders, supporters, volunteers and clients, a sneak preview of *Skydive*, when he "flies" at this year's Gizmo Awards on Nov. 1

Skydive premieres Jan. 26, 2007 at the Push International Performing Arts Festival in Vancouver. The production will then tour to Victoria, BC.

Volunteers honored at Gizmos

The volunteers that enable individuals with significant disabilities to overcome obstacles are to be honoured at a special awards ceremony in Vancouver.

The Tetra Society of North America is hosting the 2006 Gizmo Awards to thank its Lower Mainland volunteers and highlight their everyday genius. Their innovations have enabled countless people to experience greater independence and integration within their communities.

Projects being recognized at this year's event range from equipment that allows ventilator-dependent quadriplegics to sail and modifications to a recorder that allow a child to play music.

Gizmo Awards 2006:

Rocky Mountaineer Station
1755 Cottrell St, Vancouver
6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
Wednesday, Nov. 1.

Free admission.

Information about Tetra:
www.tetrasociety.org

Mobility Cup sailors share “fire to excel” in highly competitive event on English Bay



Photo: Brian Dennehy

Racing Form: One of six Sip 'n' Puff competitors at this year's Mobility Cup, Rene Dallaire of Montreal heads to the line.

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we could do in life.”

Silver Fleet competitor Rod Mack, from Victoria, BC, said everyone present was confounding stereotypes. Seriously injured in a 2003 skydiving accident, he took up adaptive sailing with DSA Victoria last July and found racing an ideal outlet for his competitive nature.

“We all have a fire to excel,” said Mack, 45. “If I believed the doctors, I’d still be in hospital.”

Gold Fleet sailor Chris Everson, of Sacramento, CA, who suffered a spinal cord injury in a 1977 auto accident, said sailing is his favorite sport.

Being out on the water is an equalizer,” said Everson, 47. “When you are out there racing, you forget you are disabled for a couple of hours. It’s the only real escape I have.”

Zoltan Pegan, 48, of Budapest, has

been sailing adaptive boats since 1997, and believes that anyone with a disability should try the sport.

“Sailing is a way of getting out enjoying the sunshine and water, which is not readily available to someone in a wheelchair,” he explained. “It’s an alternative way to get an adrenalin rush.

“There are no disabled sailing competitions in Budapest. Coming here I’ve learned a lot.”

Another person hoping to take home what he learned at the event was New Zealander Tim Dempsey, 35. He competed in the Gold Fleet hoping that the experience will help him one day reach the Paralympics and also improve what’s offered at Sailability Auckland, his home club.

“In New Zealand I don’t have the opportunity to sail in a fleet of more than five boats,” he said. “I’m competitive, but my main reason for coming here was the experience.”

For information on the event, and adaptive sailing, see: www.mobilitycup.org

Mobility Cup 2006 legacy: AbleSailNetwork launched to support sailors with disabilities

This year’s Mobility Cup left a legacy that will benefit every Canadian with an interest in adaptive sailing – the launch of AbleSailNetwork (ASN).

This is a coming together of clubs offering sailing opportunities for people with disabilities to form a cooperative association. The aim is to share information so everyone can run better, safer programs, while working together to make sailing accessible to all Canadians with disabilities.

ASN’s founding committee members, chaired by Rene Dallaire of Montreal, held its initial meeting on Sept. 9, immediately prior to Mobility Cup. While incorporation has not been finalized, members of ASN considered the proposed bylaws, letters patent and membership regulations. The first ASN Symposium was hosted Sept. 10 to further connect sailors and program operators.

The group has already developed a website (www.ablesailnetwork.ca) and produced a brochure to support sailing clubs’ fundraising efforts. Sailors and operators have been using the ASN website and participating in forums and projects to build the network and its resources.

Doug Nutting, who runs the Victoria branch of DSA BC – and one of the ASN founding directors – believes ASN, will benefit every Canadian adaptive sailor.

“Since we started I’ve had requests for everything from job descriptions to policy for risk management,” he says. “We are sharing best practices. I believe ASN will lead to safer, higher quality programs for all sailors.

“I recognize that every situation is somewhat different, with different equipment and clientele, but we have already begun sharing very useful information. I know that some of the clubs have already benefited from the fundraising information.”

More information: www.ablesailnetwork.ca.

For more information about the Disability Foundation, and all its affiliated societies – and how they can work with you – visit www.disabilityfoundation.org

**Sam Sullivan Disability Foundation
B.C. Mobility Opportunities Society
ConnecTra Society
Disabled Sailing Association
Tetra Society of North America
Vancouver Adapted Music Society
Disabled Independent Gardeners Association**



Disabled Sailing Association
of British Columbia



Tetra Society
of North America



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