



Sun Valley Adaptive Sports

Children, Teens, Adults, Veterans

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Features

Adaptive Sports Group Dreams Big . . .

Paralympic Training Site Considered

By **KAREN BOSSICK**

The Wood River Journal ~ Ketchum

Sun Valley Adaptive Sports is exploring the possibility of building a multi-million dollar Paralympic training center in the south valley.

The multi-purpose sports and recreational facility would not be used just for athletes training for the U.S. Disabled Team but could be used for a wide variety of people, including someone from Arizona with a spinal cord injury or a blind person who just wants to spend a couple months at the facility while they learn to ski.

As such, it would have housing for participants, physical and occupational therapy rooms and more.

"It's all a brainstorm right now," said Tom Iselin, executive director of SVAS.

Iselin said he had been pondering the idea of building a facility in the south valley that would provide a convenient location for local children, teens and adults with disabilities to meet and play.

"Then I thought--why not make it a regional center, why not make it a national center. Then I thought-wow!--why not a Paralympic training center. There would be a lot of benefits associated with that, including medical personnel."

Looking into it, Iselin learned that the only Paralympic training center in the country located at a ski mountain is at Lake Placid, N.Y. Park City has a national abilities center.



Sun Valley Adaptive Sports has formed a Facilities Committee to examine the possibility. The committee is made up of Erin Rheinschild, Jack Rutherford, Ben Young, Cara Barrett and Kingsley Murphy.

Iselin said staff at the Paralympic Committee has expressed interest in helping with exploratory research.

The Pentagon has also expressed interest to see more resources available to help the thousands of service members returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan with spinal cord injuries, amputations, burns, blindness and traumatic brain injuries.

It'll be up to the exploratory committee to decide just what population they want to serve and what kind of a facility they might pursue to serve those people. Possibilities include a group home for local adults with disabilities, a wave pool, rock climbing wall, ropes course, bowling lanes, kitchen, game room, gym, rooms for physical and occupational therapy, multi-purpose room for basketball, roller skating and just a place for kids to hang out and make pottery.

Such a facility could cost between \$10 million and \$30 million. If the facility were to become a Paralympic training site, it would attract a host of corporate sponsors, such as Coca Cola, which already has thrown its weight behind the Paralympics, Iselin said. A generous landowner who would be willing to donate 20 or 30 acres of land wouldn't hurt, either, he added.

"Sports builds physical skills and self-confidence, but it also provides hope, inspiration and sense of purpose. Whether these people take these skills back home or carry them on their way to a Paralympic World Cup, these skills help them perform better at work and school, improves their relationships with family and helps them cope," he said.

The whole process will be long and arduous, Iselin acknowledged.

"But like all big visions, you must put one foot in front of the other, breathe deeply and keep moving toward the summit. Can you image what a tremendous opportunity this would be for the community to help thousands of people with disabilities from around the nation-around the world!

Anyone interested in joining the Facilities Committee or wishing to donate land should contact SVAS at 726-9298.



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