



November 2009



Empowering Independent Living for the Visually Impaired

Upcoming Events

The Paralympic Games

March 12-28, 2010 - Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

The Paralympic Games are a multi-sport, multi-disability competition of elite, world-class, disabled athletes. Although similar in scope to the Olympic Games, the Paralympic Games provide an elite competition opportunity to athletes with a functional disability, which precludes their involvement in open competition of the Olympic Games. Paralympic athletes are the best of the best, who through determination and hard work, earn the honor of representing the United States on the competitive playing field at the Paralympic Games. The Paralympic Games are held approximately two weeks after the Olympic Games in the same host city/country.

The Paralympic Games provide world-class competition for elite disabled athletes at the highest level. Much like Olympians, Paralympians compete for gold, silver and bronze medals against the best disabled athletes in the world. Following the theme "Triumph of the Human Spirit," the Paralympic Games is proud of the tradition it has established to bring elite disabled athletic competition to the forefront of public consciousness. Competitive sports have proven to be an effective vehicle to promote equality, inclusion, accessibility and awareness about the capabilities of those with a physical disability. Competitive sports dispel the age-old stigma surrounding disabilities and illuminate the realm of possibility. The Paralympics truly signifies all that is right in sport.

For more information, visit www.vancouver2010.com/paralympic-games

Enightful Tips

Colorado Adaptive Resources

Following are organizations throughout Colorado that offer outdoor & indoor fitness, recreational, and cultural experiences & adventures for people with physical and cognitive disabilities and their families:

Adaptive Adventures

27888 Meadow Drive

Evergreen, CO 80439

Phone: 303.679.2770 / Toll Free: 877.679.2770

Email: info@adaptiveadventures.org

A non-profit organization dedicated to identify, promote and provide progressive sports and recreation opportunities to improve the quality of life for children and adults with physical disabilities.

<http://www.adaptiveadventures.org>



Adaptive Sports Association of Durango

P.O. Box 1884

Durango, CO 81302

Phone: 970-259-0374

Contact: Tim Kroes

Email: asa@frontier.net

Adventures of a lifetime for people with physical and cognitive disabilities. Summer and Winter activities include Skiing, Snowboarding, Whitewater Rafting, Sea Kayaking, Fishing, and Canoeing.

<http://www.asadurango.org>

Adaptive Sports Center of Crested Butte

10 Crested Butte Way

Mt. Crested Butte, CO 81225

Contact: Chris Hensely

Phone: 970-349-5733 / Fax: 970-349-4950

Email: asc@rmi.com

Provides year-round recreation activities for people with disabilities and their families.

<http://www.adaptivesports.org>

Blind Outdoor Leisure Development (BOLD)

P.O. Box 11383

Aspen, CO 81612

Contact: Patricia Paro

Phone: 970-963-1679 or 970-925-9111 / Fax: 970-963-1679

Groups for teens and adults who are sighted and blind and who enjoy outdoor sports such as snow and water skiing, and rowing.

Boulder Parks & Recreation Expand Program

3198 Broadway

Boulder, CO 80304

Phone: 303-413-7474

Contact: Jen Heilveil

Programs include adapted water-ski, golf, gymnastics, aquatics, unified sports, outdoor adventures, community outings, dances, summer day camps, fitness and much, much more.

<http://www.bouldercolorado.gov>

Breckenridge Outdoor Education Center (BOEC)

PO Box 697

Breckenridge, CO 80424

Contact: Lisa Seaman

Phone: 970-453-6422 / Fax: 970-453-4676

Email: boec@boec.org

The Breckenridge Outdoor Education Center (BOEC) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to expand the potential of people with disabilities and special needs through meaningful, educational, and inspiring outdoor experiences. Host chapter for DS/USA's Ski Spectacular in December.

<http://www.boec.org>

Challenge Aspen

P.O. Box M

Aspen, CO 81612

Contact: Wendy Bontempo

Phone: 970-923-0578 / Fax: 970-923-7338

Email: wendy@challengeaspen.com

Provides recreational and cultural experiences for individuals who have mental or physical disabilities.

<http://www.challengeaspen.com>

Colorado Discover Ability Integrated Outdoor Adventure

P.O. Box 1924

Grand Junction, CO 81502

Contact: Tyler Jones

Phone: 970-257-1222

Phone at Powderhorn Resort: 970-268-5700 - Ext. 2037

Email: ski@powderhorn.com

Promote increased independence and self-worth through outdoor recreation for individuals with disabilities, as well as for their families and friends.

<http://www.powderhorn.com>

Denver Parks & Recreation Special Needs Program

1849 Emerson St.

Denver, CO 80218

Phone: 303-839-4800

Contact: Doty Erickson

http://www.denvergov.org/Parks_Recreation/



Eldora Special Recreation Program (ESRP)

P.O. Box 19106

Boulder, CO 80308-2016

Contact: Bill Head

Phone: 303-422-0606 / Fax: 303-440-5752

Email: WJHEAD@yahoo.com

Program offering unique skiing and winter sports recreation opportunities for physically and mentally challenged individuals

<http://www.esrp.com/>

Foresight Ski Guides, Inc.

PO Box 18944

Denver, CO 80218-0944

Contact: Mark G. Davis

Phone: 303-860-0972

Email: ForesightSkiing@aol.com

Affordable and accessible snow sports experience for blind and visually impaired people

<http://www.ForesightSkiGuides.org>

Keystone Adaptive Center

Keystone Resort

Mountain House (base of Discovery Lift)

Phone: 800-383-2632 / 970-453-5633

Supported by Breckenridge Outdoor Education Center, the center provides alpine, skiing and snowboarding lessons to people with disabilities and other special needs.

<http://keystone.snow.com/info/keystone.adaptive.asp>

Medicine Horse Center Equine Assisted Therapies

P.O. 1074

Mancos, CO 81328

Phone: 970-533-7403 / Fax: 970-533-7405

E-Mail: info@medicinehorsecenter.org

The Medicine Horse Center offers equine assisted therapeutic services to people of all ages with physical, cognitive, emotional or age-related challenges. Under the guidance of licensed health care therapists and horse professionals, client's interactions with horses aim to foster emotional, social, spiritual, physical and psychological growth.

<http://www.medicinehorsecenter.org/index.htm>

National Sports Center for the Disabled

P.O. Box 1290

Winter Park, CO 80482

Contact: Paul DiBello

Phone: 970-726-1548 / Fax: 970-726-4112

Email: info@nscd.org

Provides quality adaptive recreation programs in over 20 sports.

<http://www.nscd.org>



Telluride Adaptive Sports Program

697 Mtn. Village Blvd.

Telluride, CO 81435

Contact: Colleen Trout

Phone: 970-728-7537 / Fax: 970-728-7496

Email: tasp@telluridecolorado.net

TASP helps people with disabilities develop life skills by providing affordable, quality sports and recreational experiences.

<http://www.tellurideadaptivesports.org>

U.S. Association of Blind Athletes (USABA)

33 North Institute Street

Colorado Springs, CO 80903

Phone: 719-630-0422

Increase the number and quality of grassroots-through-competitive, world-class athletic opportunities for Americans who are blind or visually impaired.

<http://www.usaba.org>

Vail Adaptive Ski Program

P.O. Box 7

Vail, CO 81658

Phone: 970-479-3264

Contact: Ruth DeMuth

World-renowned program dedicated to adaptive skiers, including the blind and physically challenged

<http://vail.snow.com/winter/ss.adaptive.asp>

Visually Impaired & Blind Skiers (VIBeS)

5636 N. Union Blvd.

Colorado Springs, CO 80918

(719)593-1982

Contact: Rick Palmer, President

Phone: 719-593-1982

Email: tripcaptain@coloradovibes.org

Offers recreational and physical fitness activities to individuals with low or no vision.

<http://coloradovibes.org>

Enightful People

Erik Weihenmayer



On September 5, 2002, just eighteen days before his 34th birthday, Erik Weihenmayer realized his dream of conquering the Seven Summits - climbing the highest peaks on each of the seven continents. Only 100 climbers in the world have accomplished this feat. At only 33, Erik held two special distinctions among that group. He was one of the youngest people ever to do this, and he is the only blind man to have done this.

Erik was born with a disease of the eye's nerve tissue known as retinoschisis. According to the Kellogg Eye Institute at the University of Michigan, "retinoschisis affects the retinal cells in the macula (the central fixation point of vision at the back of the eye). Retinoschisis is technically a form of macular degeneration. However, there are different types of macular degeneration, and many people diagnosed with macular degeneration do not have retinoschisis."

Erik was legally blind as a child. The disease progressed into glaucoma, and he had lost all of his vision by the age of thirteen. Erik and his family did not let his blindness limit the adventures they had together, and Erik's father constantly encouraged his son to challenge the conventional ideas of what a blind person can and cannot do. Ed Weihenmayer would take his sons hiking often and sent a young Erik to youth camps for the blind. This is where Erik first learned about mountain climbing and where the first seeds of adventure were planted in his mind and heart.

In 1987, the year he graduated from high school, Erik's life of adventure began when he became the first blind person to hike the 50-mile Inca Trail into Machu Picchu. His adventures became grander and more amazing from there:

- In 1993, Erik crossed the Batura Glacier in the Karakoram Mountains of Pakistan.
- In 1995, Erik reached the 20,320' summit of Mt. McKinley, North America's highest peak.
- In 1997, he climbed his second continental summit, Africa's Mt. Kilimanjaro.
- In 2001, Erik became the first blind man ever to reach the summit of Mt. Everest.

- In 2004, he led an expedition in Tibet called “**Climbing Blind**” project, including blind teens from the *Braille Without Borders* school for blind at Lhasa, Tibet.
- In 2006, helped to lead Global Explorers sponsored expedition, *Leading the Way*, to Peru. The expedition film, “Fellowship of the Andes”, premiered in New York City on October 28th, 2006.
- In 2007, he was the speaker at Lehigh University's spring commencement ceremony on May 21st.
- In 2009, he was a speaker at the Presidential Youth Inaugural Conference on January 19th.
- In 2009, he was a speaker at the Babson College spring commencement ceremony on May 16th where he was also awarded a PhD in Humane Letters.

These are just a few of Erik’s accomplishments. Always eager to push himself, Erik is also a certified scuba and sky diver, skier, marathon runner, cyclist, and rock climber. He has ridden a tandem bike with his father from Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam and has scaled El Capitan, a 3300 foot sheer rock wall in Yosemite. Erik has said of his mountain climbing expeditions, “Part of my motivation ... was trying to understand this disease and its limitations. What can one expect from their life, living with glaucoma? If I can go to such high altitudes with such high pressure in my eyes....that’s pretty encouraging for everyone living with glaucoma.”

Erik has also written several books, including his autobiography, and speaks all over the country. He has given motivational speeches to Fortune 500 companies, colleges and universities, churches and other community organizations. In addition to his writing and speaking, Erik holds a Bachelor’s degree from Boston College and a Master’s degree in Middle School Education from Lesley College in Cambridge, MA.

When he is not scaling a mountain or on one of his other adventures, Erik lives outside of Denver, Colorado with his wife Ellen, whom he married at the 13,000’ mark of Kilimanjaro!

Products

Columbus Talking Compass

This compact hand-held unit weighs just 3-1/2 ounces. User simply points compass in required direction, presses button, and unit immediately speaks the compass point (even while running). Announces four major compass points, as well as the four interim compass points. Speaks in either English or Spanish. Features clear, digitized speech and ceramic piezo electric speaker. Operates on two A23 (12V) batteries (Included). One year warranty.



Available through Enight Skills Center.

Support Groups

For a list of local support groups, please call:

American Council of the Blind of Colorado
Sue Fenniman
303-831-0117

Center for People With Disabilities
Steve Johnson
303-442-8662



A Message to Our Supporters

Ensign is facing very major financial challenges in the coming months. We are a non-profit organization, and the majority of our funding (about 60%) comes from foundation grants and individual donations, with the remainder coming from professional services and store sales. Although we've been busy, we can't always make up the shortfall in grants and donations. As a result, we've gone through a round of budget cuts, from staff pay cuts to cutbacks on operating hours in Greeley and Fort Collins. We are determined to keep Ensign open and firmly believe this is a temporary problem. But we need your help. As we enter the holiday season, we ask that you think of Ensign when making your charitable donations. Thank you for supporting Ensign Skills Center!

The mission of Ensign Skills Center is to provide low-vision clients with the opportunity to enhance their life skills, increase their levels of confidence and independence, and enrich their lives through adaptive training and technology.

Please consider helping!

If you would like to make a donation, please call us at 303-757-4500. We are an IRS 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation and all donations are tax deductible.

Thank you for your support!

Ensign Skills Center

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