

Evaluation of Rink Link

Alpha One – Center for Independent Living

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Description

Rink Link is a federally funded grant project developed by Alpha One, Maine's Center for Independent Living. Rink Link's primary goal is "that Americans of all ages who have a range of disabilities have the information, access, resources, and peer support they need to fully participate in ice sports and recreational skating."

The original grant from the US Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration (Award Number H128J990019-01) began October 1, 1999 and extended through September 30, 2002. Project management requested and received a nine month extension of the performance period resulting in a revised project end date of June 30, 2003.

This process evaluation report reflects Rink Link project activity for the period October 1, 1999 through June 30, 2003.

Methodology

The original evaluation plan included a Year 1 and Year 2 Interim Evaluation Summary followed by the Final Evaluation Report. Rink Link management cancelled the Year 1 and Year 2 Interim reporting. The evaluation plan was modified to eliminate the planned Year 1 and Year 2 reports and postpone all evaluation reporting until the end of the performance period.

Data presented in this report was collected by Rink Link project staff during the 45 month project period. Additional information was collected by a project evaluator through in-person and telephone interviews with the project manager.

Report Summary

This report is organized as follows:

- Project Goal, Objectives, and Major Focus Areas
- Project Development Summary
- Rink Link Sustainability
- Lessons Learned
- Evaluator Observations
- Completed Activities Proposed in the Rink Link Workplan.

Spread throughout the report are quotations from letters received by project management.

Project Goal, Objectives and Major Focus Areas

The goal of Rink Link is “that Americans of all ages who have a range of disabilities have the information, access, resources, and peer support they need to fully participate in ice sports and recreational skating.”

Ice sports include sled hockey, amputee hockey, developmental hockey, wheelchair curling, recreational skating, figure skating, speed skating, and broom ball.

The project objectives are to:

- Improve the awareness, knowledge and skills people with disabilities need to fully participate in the range of ice sports and recreational skating.
- Improve the knowledge and skills of physical education, health and rehabilitation professionals about the benefits of ice sports for individuals with disabilities and methods to increase their participation in adaptive ice sports and recreation.
- Improve the awareness of ice sports equipment manufacturers, vendors, rink owners and managers, skating clubs, ice sports teams and others within the skating community and industry about the recreational and employment goals of people with disabilities, and the guidelines of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Focus areas were to:

- Support and encourage the development of new and existing adaptive ice sports programs.
- Assist ice rinks and arenas with all aspects of accessibility.
- Identify sources of adaptive ice sports equipment.
- Support and conduct adaptive ice sports clinics at ice arenas in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont.
- Present Rink Link at national, regional and local ice sport related conferences and trade shows.
- Conduct clinics and presentations on the benefits of improving access to ice sports for people with disabilities at New England based schools, colleges, universities, rehabilitation centers and clubs.

“I am grateful to have been offered a chance to participate in a sport where I could learn new skills and enjoy great camaraderie and which leaves me with an infinite opportunity to improve!”

Project Development Summary

Rink Link Staff

Grant Manager

Steven C. Tremblay, Alpha One's Founder and President

Mr. Tremblay was responsible for meeting state and federal reporting requirements. Other activities included assisting with the development of a self-sufficiency plan and issuing quarterly reports to the Alpha One Board of Directors.

Project Director

Dennis Fitzgibbons, Alpha One's Director of Independent Living and Administration

Mr. Fitzgibbons trained and supervised staff. He provided oversight on the record-keeping process, the development of Rink Link brochures, and the development and operations of the project.

Project Manager

Weston Smith, Independent Living Specialist

Mr. Smith was responsible for coordinating and conducting Rink Link outreaches, clinics, and trade shows in the promotion of all types of ice sports for people with disabilities. He also controls the *mPower Adaptive Equipment Loan Program* for Alpha One's Bangor office and is a member of Maine's Wheelchair Curling Team.

Alpha One Support Staff

All staff, from Access Specialists to the Systems Administrator, Accounting Associates, Independent Living Specialists and Administrative Assistants at Alpha One received regular project updates and provided support to the project.

“It is my belief that our club thrives on diversity. The more diverse we are, the less alienated any one person can feel because there is always someone that another can relate to. I truly believe that growing the diversity of the club is the key to our long term success.”

Rink Link Outreach

Rink Link outreach was conducted to inform people with disabilities and others of the benefits of participation in ice sports and to collect information on adaptive ice sports, equipment, accessible arenas, teams and leagues. A number of different outreach strategies were employed by project management. Toward the end of the grant period Rink Link's brochure, *Rink Link – Ice Sports are Hot. Access is Cool* was mailed to all individuals on the Rink Link contact list (See Tables 1 and 2 below) and to all of the Independent Living Centers and Client Assistance Programs (CAP) in the United States.

Press releases describing Rink Link efforts were mailed out January 2002 to the major media outlets in Maine. The release went to 14 Maine daily and weekly newspapers and to news/assignment editors at six Maine television stations. This press release and contacts the project manager developed resulted in articles appearing in:

- 4 Maine daily newspapers
- 3 Maine community weekly publications
- 2 New England regional publications
- 4 National publications

Rink Link management reported that the USA Wheelchair Curling Team (Belfast Curling Club, Belfast Maine) also received television coverage on some of the major networks (NBC, CBS, ABC) before and after the 2002 World Wheelchair Curling Championship in Sursee, Switzerland. (See section below for a description of USA Wheelchair Curling Team)

A complete chronology of articles written and published about Rink Link and associated efforts can be found in Appendix A.

Project staff presented at conferences, trade shows, various association meetings, universities and schools. Rink Link conducted curling and sled hockey clinics at ice arenas allowing attendees to observe and participate in these sports. Rink Link staff reported reaching 2,646 individuals who learned about Rink Link and the benefits of improving access to and participation in ice sports. Below is a summary of the scope of the presentations:

- 114 presentations in Maine reaching 1,590 individuals
- 14 presentations in the other New England states to a regional audience of 411 individuals
- 9 presentations to a national audience totaling 645 individuals

A complete list of conferences, trade shows, and other Rink Link outreach activities with dates and locations can be found in Appendix B.

The project maintains a contact list of individuals and organizations interested in improving access to ice sports and have established contacts in most states (See Table 1 below). A breakdown of contacts by type of organization or category is presented in Table 2. The contact list continues to grow and is updated regularly as Rink Link's outreach efforts are on-going.

Rink Link staff uses the contact list database to provide referrals to individuals and organizations that want to connect with others in their area involved in expanding ice sports for people with a disability. Interested parties do not have direct access to the contact list database via the Internet but are directed to call Rink Link through the national, toll free telephone number (1-800-300-6016 Voice or TTY) set up by the project or by emailing the Project Manager at wsmith@alphaone.com.

Table 1
Number of Entries by State on the Rink Link Contact List
(N = 112)

State	#	State	#	State	#
Alabama	2	Louisiana	1	New York	11
Arizona	1	Massachusetts	16	Ohio	2
California	3	Maryland	2	Pennsylvania	10
Colorado	5	Maine	2	Rhode Island	1
Connecticut	3	Michigan	2	Tennessee	3
Dist. of Columbia	1	Minnesota	6	Texas	7
Florida	4	Nevada	1	Utah	2
Georgia	2	North Carolina	1	Vermont	1
Iowa	1	New Hampshire	2	Virginia	2
Illinois	7	New Jersey	2	Washington	2
Indiana	3	New Mexico	1	Wisconsin	3

Rink Link has demonstrated that it can create and maintain an information database that is national in scope.

“To all at Alpha One, I would like to thank you for making my life more enjoyable. This year was my first year getting out on the ice and playing hockey. I've lost forty pounds (4 months) and feel in great shape. As an above knee amputee, I don't get much cardio and now I have it for the rest (of my) life!”

Table 2
Breakdown by Category/Organization of the Rink Link Contact List
(N = 112)

Category/Organization Type	Number of Contacts on List
Sled/Amputee Hockey Program/Team	58
Ice Sports Association	20
Other	12
Emerging Ice Sports Program	8
Hospital or Medical Center/Service	6
Municipality	3
Rehabilitation Program/Service	3
Recreation Program/Service	2

To read one individual’s reaction to the outreach efforts of the Rink Link project, see Appendix C. You’ll find a letter sent to Wes Smith, Rink Link Project Manager, from the President of Unique Inventions, Inc., a manufacturer of ice sleds or “sledges” that are used in the sport of Sled Hockey.

“...curling is a fascinating and challenging game which requires strategy, skill, some strength, some physical flexibility, and a modest amount of physical endurance. With training I think wheelchair players can achieve a truly excellent "world-class" level of play.”

Rink Link Product Development

BROCHURE – *Rink Link – Ice Sports are Hot. Access is Cool.*

The project developed and produced a two-color, tri-fold brochure that describes the project and explains why access to ice sports is important. The brochure has a tear-off sheet that functions as a form to request additional information, and a source for building the project contact list.

FACT SHEET – *The ADA and the Ice Sports Community*

Rink Link researched and developed a fact sheet to help members of the ice sports industry understand how the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) affects their employment practices and access to their goods and services. Section titles include: Employment and the ADA; Public Accommodations and the ADA; Services in an Integrated Setting; Removal of Architectural Barriers; Effective Communication with the Public; and How Rink Link Can Help You.

VIDEO – *Ice Sports*

Rink Link created a brief video, VHS format, for use at in-person outreaches, clinics and conferences. The 14 -minute tape shows people with disabilities engaged in a variety of ice sports. The video provides a glimpse into a sled hockey clinic, a US Olympic Sled Hockey Team practice, an amputee hockey team practice, a match between the US and Canadian Wheelchair Curling teams, and a hockey game played by individuals with developmental disabilities. Project management reports the video has been a great asset when presenting to groups and individuals interested in expanding access to ice sports for people with a disability. Rink Link will have copies of the video available upon request and will run it on the project website as a streaming file.

INFORMATION PACKET FOR CONFERENCES

Rink Link participated in a number of trade shows, conferences, and expositions (See Appendix A). The project developed a packet of information for distribution at these shows that includes: the Rink Link brochure; an eight-page fact sheet on the sport of sled hockey; an American Amputee Hockey Association flyer; a Special Hockey International team start-up flyer; a description of the sport of curling and wheelchair curling; and Rink Link's *The ADA and The Ice Sports Community* fact sheet.

BROCHURE - *Wheelchair Curling - Belfast Wheelchair Curling Team*

The project developed and produced a full color, tri-fold brochure that includes the team mission statement, 2001-2002 season results, history of the Belfast Wheelchair Curling Team, the team goals and a request for sponsors.

“They (Belfast Curling Club) put a welcome sign out for us. Made a special ramp. There is always someone to help me in and out of the van.”

CURLING CLUB SURVEY – *United States Curling Association (USCA) Curling Club Survey*

Project management developed a survey instrument to help establish which curling clubs are equipped to accommodate wheelchair curlers and which clubs, with some minor changes, could accommodate wheelchair curlers. In addition to assessing curling club needs, the information from the completed surveys helped the project target outreach activities. The survey was administered by the USCA and the association reported findings back to Rink Link (33% of the surveys returned with responses). Please see Appendix D for the survey with responses and a summary of respondent comments.

NATIONAL TOLL FREE INFORMATION LINE (1-800-300-6016)

In order to make Rink Link's accessible ice sports information and resources available to individuals and organizations nationally, the project converted what was previously a Maine only toll free number to a national toll free number. The national number was included on the project's printed materials and in the press release. Most articles written about the project and project-sponsored activities included the toll free number. Until the Rink Link web site is operational, the primary means to access the project remains the toll free number.

RINK LINK WEB SITE (In Development)

The project has a presence on the Alpha One website (www.alphaonenow.com). There is a brief description of the project goals and objectives along with Alpha One contact information. The Rink Link web site launch was delayed due to organizational changes at Alpha One. At the time of this writing the Rink Link site was in the final stages of development. The project evaluator was able to preview the site—it includes drop-down menus for curling, figure skating and ice hockey (sled, developmental and amputee). Drop-down selections include events, equipment, ice arenas, rules of play, history and Rink Link contact information. The site also includes descriptions of the various ice sports, a glossary of terms and, when launched, will include the streaming video mentioned above.

“I have nothing but positive comments about the whole experience. Our club has new members, good press, greater visibility and new friends, too.”

United States Wheelchair Curling Team Belfast Curling Club

One focus area of the project was to support and encourage the development of new and existing adaptive ice sports programs. To address this focus area, Rink Link conducted clinics (See Appendix B for a complete list) at hockey rinks and curling clubs. One clinic held on December 5, 2000, at the Belfast Curling Club in Belfast Maine was particularly successful. Club members were able to see how a person that uses a wheelchair could get on and off the ice, deliver a stone and enjoy the competition that is curling. The Belfast Curling Club welcomed the new members who used wheelchairs and scooters. Members assisted wheelchair curlers on and off the ice, designated a number of parking places near the ramp into the facility, and integrated the new members into their leagues and competitions.

When Rink Link Program Manager Wes Smith learned that the First World Wheelchair Curling Championship was to be held in Switzerland in January 2002 he began recruiting other wheelchair curlers. Recruitment efforts were successful and a team of six wheelchair curlers and a coach began to practice and compete at the Belfast Curling Club. The United States Curling Association (USCA) selected the team to represent the USA at the First World Wheelchair Curling Championship.

The USA (Belfast) Wheelchair Curling Team competed along with teams from Canada, Switzerland, Scotland, England, Bulgaria, Italy, Sweden and Denmark in Sursee, Switzerland, for the World Championship. The team from Belfast came in fifth place, with four wins and four losses.

Press releases describing the USA Wheelchair Curling Team along with the interest generated from the competition and events leading up to it improved awareness of Rink Link and wheelchair curling in general. A chronology of articles written and published about the USA Wheelchair Curling Team and the 2002 World Wheelchair Curling Championship held in Sursee, Switzerland can be found in Appendix A.

The USCA chose the Belfast Curling Club to host a wheelchair curling qualifying tournament in November 2003. The winner of the tournament will go on to represent the USA at the next World Wheelchair Curling Championship to be held January 19-24, 2004, in Sursee, Switzerland.

Rink Link's involvement in the high profile World Wheelchair Curling Championship had a broad outreach effect. The team was Maine-based but the resulting publicity went well beyond.

The USCA worked with Rink Link to promote wheelchair curling and assess the technical assistance needs of curling clubs across the country. Rink Link staff developed a mail survey which was mailed to approximately 90 curling clubs that are members of the USCA. One third of the surveys were returned. Rink Link used the information collected to expand the project contact database and to target outreach to the curling clubs that expressed interest in expanding the sport to people who use wheelchairs. See Appendix D for the survey with responses and a summary of respondent comments.

Project Sustainability

Efforts to secure funding for the continuation of Rink Link began during the final year of the project and will continue beyond the grant period. Project management has targeted equipment manufacturers for annual sponsorships and donations. Manufacturers of ice rink equipment and products - Frank J. Zamboni & Co. Inc., maker of ice resurfacing equipment; Drew & Associates, maker of adaptive curling equipment; CCM and other hockey/skating equipment companies - have been or will be asked to contribute. Other potential sources of funding under consideration include the United Way, The Stephen and Tabitha King Foundation, a Maine-based philanthropic organization, and other grant making organizations.

No continuation funds have been secured at the time of this evaluation report.

Lessons Learned

During an interview at the end of the project performance period, the evaluator asked the project manager the following two questions:

Where there any unexpected challenges or barriers?

- **A New Idea:** the initial presentation to the United States Curling Association (USCA) on the idea of wheelchair curling as sport was challenging because the idea was brand new. Rink Link conducted a presentation to key USCA officials that included testimonial letters from members of the Belfast Curling Club (wheelchair curlers and non-wheelchair curlers) and was successful in receiving their endorsement.
- **Liability and Insurance:** ice skating facility managers many were reluctant to consider expanding programs for people with disabilities due to concerns around liability and insurance. The concerns centered on mixing sleds with skaters during public skates at the rink. Rink Link's Project Manager worked with the insurance company, Rice Specialty Risk, Co., to formulate a letter that was forwarded to the ice skating facility managers. The letter assures managers that existing liability policies for injury cover all persons that use the rink (including individuals with a disability). However these policies do not provide coverage for ADA lawsuits. In addition, Rink Link had an insurance representative speak at the Ice Skating Institute.
- **Seasonal Interest:** participation in ice sports is more concentrated during the winter months which presented the project a smaller "window of interest" for outreach activities.
- **Limited Resources:** the Rink Link Web Site launch date was modified. The need for the project web site coincided with an expanded, updated web-based information system and incorporation of a new marketing strategy for the whole of Alpha One. Limited human resources in the information technology area made getting the Rink Link Web Site up and running a challenge.

If you or someone else was going to develop a project similar to Rink Link, what would you do differently?

- Complete brochure design and printing as early on in the project as possible.
- Develop a national mailing list and initiate a mass mailing early on in the project.
- Work on the development of national resources from the beginning.

Evaluator Observations

- Rink Link supported the development of the first competitive Wheelchair Curling Team in the United States. The team was selected by the US Curling Association to represent the US at the first World Wheelchair Curling Championship (January 2002) in Switzerland.
- Dartmouth College is developing a hockey puck that emits sound for use by visually impaired players as a result of Rink Link's presence at the Access Expo in Manchester, New Hampshire.
- The project raised national awareness to the benefits of improving access to and encouraging participation in ice sports for people with disabilities.
- Rink Link assisted in the development of a Bangor (Maine) sled hockey team.
- Determined that liability and liability insurance issues need not be a barrier to providing ice time to individuals with a disability.
- Assisted in the creation of the Utica, New York Wheelchair Curling Team.
- Established itself as a resource to promote ice sports for people with disabilities that will function beyond the original grant funding period.
- Rink Link has a strong Maine presence with a national and New England presence at trade shows and conventions.
- The development of the Belfast Wheelchair Curling Team and their participation in the first World Wheelchair Curling Championship developed into a major project activity that was not anticipated.
- This effort to promote wheelchair curling appears to have deflected some of Rink Link energy away from other ice sports such as recreational skating, figure skating, speed skating, and broom ball, but had positive impact on media coverage which expanded interest nationally in wheelchair curling.

- The project completed most of the original activities from its workplan. The most significant exception to this is the development of a website, which is still outstanding.
- In order to achieve the project goal, “that Americans of all ages who have a range of disabilities have the information, access, resources, and peer support they need to fully participate in ice sports and recreational skating”, Rink Link must become sustainable. At present, sustainability is uncertain.

“Our curlers on wheels have taught us how to compensate for their disability, how to help or not help them, and how to treat this as an everyday life style. They have earned our respect, and the respect of others. Their joining has been a very good thing.”

Rink Link Workplan: October 1, 1999 – June 30, 2003

Following is a list of activities that were in the original Rink Link proposal. For activities that were modified, postponed or eliminated from the original workplan a brief explanation has been provided.

Activity	Completed	Change in Workplan	Additional Details
Hire staff		X	Project used existing staff, no new staff hired.
Hire evaluator	X		
Alpha One project staff orientation	X		This is an on-going activity.
Alpha One project staff training	X		This is an on-going activity.
On-going project staff development	X		This is an on-going activity.
Weekly staff meetings		X	Staff met monthly during the first year of the project. Project staff met on an as-needed basis and via teleconference for the remainder of the project.
Develop/Update clearinghouse database		X	The Rink Link Project website has been delayed. Adaptive ice sports information not available electronically via the Internet. Information is currently available by phone or e-mail through the Project Manager. Rink Link stores contact list information electronically at the Alpha One Bangor office. This is an on-going activity.
Develop/Update mail/contact list	X		This is an on-going activity.
Design web site		X	Project website roll out has been delayed due to the consolidation of Alpha One operations and the development of a new Alpha One website and marketing strategy. The current plan is to have Rink Link website operational by September 2003.
Develop/distribute project flyer	X		Completed in 2000

Activity	Completed	Change in Workplan	Additional Details
Develop/distribute press release	X		The project issued an initial press release in April 2000 and regularly issues releases to announce upcoming project events, clinics, etc.
Plan dissemination		X	Project management reported a delay in mailing outreach materials which resulted in Rink Link establishing a stronger Maine/New England presence and less of a national presence that planned.
Conduct dissemination		X	Project management reported a delay in mailing outreach materials which resulted in Rink Link establishing a stronger Maine/New England presence and less of a national presence that planned. This is an on-going activity.
Publicize 800 number and website		X	The project converted an in-state 800 number to a national 800 number and publicized the change. Publicity regarding the website has been delayed until the website is up and running.
Collect resource materials	X		Rink Link has collected written materials, web links and contacts for manufacturers of adaptive equipment used in ice sports, accessible ice arenas, wheelchair and other adaptive teams/leagues. This is an on-going activity.
Recruit/train Peer Advocates	X		This was conducted informally through Rink Link clinics and other outreach activities. This is an on-going activity.
Recruit peers for national network	X		Over 100 peers were recruited, identified and are included in the contact list. These are individuals who, when requested, provide support and expertise in some aspect of ice sports. This is not a network that regularly communicates and functions independently. Peer contact information is available through the Project Manager. This is an on-going activity.

Activity	Completed	Change in Workplan	Additional Details
Provide daily I&R, TA via phone, web, TTY, fax		X	Website not available at this time. There is insufficient data to make an objective determination of activity on a daily basis. This is an on-going activity.
Conduct outreach to ice sports community, industry and manufacturers	X		See Appendix B This is an on-going activity.
Assess industry TA needs		X	Accomplished via Rink Link's National Curling Club Survey, ice center outreach activities and clinics. There is insufficient data to make an objective determination of the thoroughness of this activity. This is an on-going activity.
Attend regional and national ice industry conventions	X		Participated in four ice industry conventions. See Appendix B for details. This is an on-going activity.
Four Maine discovery events	X	X	Project staff has conducted 12+ events in Maine to-date. This is an on-going activity.
Four New Hampshire discovery events		X	Rink Link supported the New Hampshire-based Northeast Passages organization who conducted the New Hampshire clinics or discovery events. This is an on-going activity.
Four Vermont discovery events	X		Four events conducted in January 2003. This is an on-going activity.
Quarterly reports to Alpha One Board	X		This is an on-going activity.
Conduct evaluation	X	X	The original evaluation plan called for Year 1 and Year 2 Interim Evaluation Reports, project staff eliminated these from the evaluation.
Become a self-sufficient project		X	This is a goal of Rink Link and Alpha One. Future continuation funding has not been secured at this time. This is an on-going activity.

Appendix A Press Chronology

Chronology of Rink Link Related Press

New Project Smooths the Way for People with Disabilities on Ice

“...Alpha One knows that individuals of all ages who have physical and mental disabilities can fully enjoy ice sports and recreational skating if they are given the opportunity. Rink Link can also provide tips to figure skating coaches or hockey teams on how to adapt their training for people with disabilities.”

Rink Rat, newsletter, North East Ice Skating Manager’s Association, December 2000

Belfast Curling Club Offers Free Clinic for the Disabled

“The clinic is one of several similar programs associated with Rink Link, a grant program of the Dept. of Education, which promotes adaptive ice sports for adults and children with disabilities.”

Bangor Daily News, January 17, 2001

Rink Link Project Out to Show That Ice Sports Are Hot and Access is Cool

“Access means more than ramps into rink facilities. To Rink Link, access is equipment, team sports, and training programs that are open to all.”

Ice Skating Institute (ISI) Conference Brochure, May 2001

Around the Rinks: News from the World of Skating

“Through its project called Rink Link, Alpha One is proving that ice activities such as hockey, curling, and figure skating can be adapted at varying levels of ability for all people with disabilities.

Rink Magazine, September/October 2001

Calculus on Ice

“Through Rink Link, an ice-sport grant sponsored by Alpha One, ..., five wheelchair players joined the (Belfast) club in 2001...”

Northern New England Journey – an AAA Travel and Lifestyle Magazine, November/December 2002

Disabilities Don’t Stop Winter Enjoyment

“Grab some ice time. If ice has more appeal than snow, Rink Link, a project of Alpha One, is a resource for ice sports information... One option is amputee hockey...A lesser known sport is wheelchair curling.”

One in Five, an Alpha One Publication, Winter 2002

Chronology of USA Wheelchair Curling Team & 2002 World Wheelchair Curling Championship Related Press

Maine Curlers Compete in 1st Official World Wheelchair Curling Championships

“The players’ interest in curling started with a Rink Link grant from Alpha One, a company in Brewer, Maine, dedicated to providing independent living assistance to the disabled.”

United States Curling Association’s Website, January 28, 2001

Maine Curlers Will Compete in World Curling Championship

“...Dutch was exhilarated when she sent a stone down the ice. Her reaction was, ‘Wow! I can do it. I can play again. I can be a doer instead of just a viewer’.”

The Waldo Independent, December 27, 2001, Vol. 17, No. 52

No Time for ‘Victim Mode’ – Greenlaw off to Switzerland for Wheelchair Curling Tourney

“... the challenge of mastering a new sport reflects her attitude: Move forward and make the best of things.”

Capital Weekly, January 10, 2002, Vol. 8 Issue 2

A Need to Compete – Disabled Athletes to Represent Country in World Championships

“It will be fun traveling overseas (for the World Championships). I haven’t done it since my accident. There are a lot of things I want to experience now.”

Kennebec Journal, January 14, 2002

Wheelchair Curlers to Compete in Switzerland

“Other than Mary Dutch, most of the team members are new to the sport, having learned it through the newly organized Alpha One – Belfast Curling Club program.”

Bangor Daily News, January 14, 2002

Surry Man Will Compete – Wheelchair Curlers Headed for Switzerland

“...one of six members of the team formed through the efforts of Alpha One, a Portland-based nonprofit organization that provides services to people with disabilities, and the Belfast curling club.”

The Ellsworth American, January 17, 2002

Curlers Give World Contest a Whirl

“Maine wheelchair athletes are excited to compete in curling, a sport once off-limits to them.”

Maine Sunday Telegram, January 20, 2002

Mainers to Represent U.S. in Wheelchair Curling Tourney

“The U.S. Curling Association has selected three men, three women and their coach, who train at the Belfast Curling Club, to compete against teams from 10 other nations.”

The Weekly, January 24, 2002

USA Wheelchair Curlers Finish Fifth

“It was awesome. We were awesome, says Mary Weaver Dutch of Belfast as she starts to talk about her experiences at the first World Wheelchair Curling Championships held in Sursee, Switzerland, last week.”

The Waldo Independent, January 31, 2002, Vol. 18, No. 5

Chess on Ice – Local Talent

“Curling has become an interesting challenge for me because it’s not a contact sport ... But I am really enjoying the strategy and opportunity for competitiveness that it brings to people with disabilities.”

Sports ‘N Spokes – The Magazine for Wheelchair Sports and Recreation, January 2003, Vol. 29, No. 1

Appendix B Outreach & Presentations

Rink Link Conference or Trade Show Presentations

Date	Conference/Show Name, City, State	Number of Contacts
09/12/00	Access Expo, Manchester, NH	100
10/11/00	Bangor Chamber of Commerce Trade Show	25
04/18/01	Northeast Ice Skating Managers Association (NEISMA), Falmouth, ME	80
05/28/01	Ice Skating Institute (ISI) Trade Show, Las Vegas, NE	190
08/30/01	American Therapeutic Recreation Association (ATRA), New Orleans, LA	90
10/03/01	Bangor Chamber of Commerce Trade Show, Bangor, ME	46
10/07/01	Health Expo Trade Show, Bangor, ME	20
11/05/01	Access Expo Trade Show, Manchester, NH	90
01/07/02	Lets Play Hockey Trade Show, Las Vegas, NE	180
05/28/02	Ice Skating Institute (ISI) Trade Show & Conference, Dallas, TX	56
09/04/02	Access Expo, Manchester, NH	60
01/17/03	Utica Curling Club, Utica NY match with Canadian Wheelchair Curling Team, worked with new forming wheelchair team	13
01/17/03	Presentation to Utica NY Rotary Club, Utica, NY	50
04/05/03	Wheelchair Curling Clinic, Laurel, MD	8
04/24/03	Maine State Conference of Parks and Recreation, Rockport, ME	10
Total Number of Contacts		1,018

Miscellaneous Events/Presentations

Date	Event Name, City, State	Number of Contacts
01/22/02 thru 01/25/02	World Wheelchair Curling Championship, Sursee, Switzerland	
03/12/02	USA Wheelchair Team Recognition, Maine State House, Augusta, ME	60
04/12/02	United States Curling Association Annual Meeting, presentations on wheelchair curling, Denmark, ND	34
05/12/02	Grand National Curling Club Annual Meeting, presentation on wheelchair curling, Poughkeepsie, NY	24
Total Number of Contacts		118

Year 2000 Rink Link Outreaches/Clinics

Date	Location, City, State	Number of Contacts
01/07/00	Kennebec Ice Arena, Hallowell, ME	1
02/02/00	University of Maine, Machias, ME	1
02/03/00	Alfond Ice Arena, University of Maine, Orono, ME	1
02/03/00	Bouchard Ice Arena, Brewer, ME	1
02/09/00	Penobscot Council in Transition Resource Fair, ME	36
02/10/00	Biddeford Ice Arena, Biddeford, ME	1
02/17/00	Maine Sports Outfitters, Rockport, ME	1
02/18/00	Sawyer Ice Arena, Bangor, ME	1
02/23/00	Central Maine Civic Center, Lewiston, ME	1
02/23/00	Ingersoll Ice Arena, Auburn, ME	1
02/23/00	Underhill Arena at Bates College, Lewiston, ME	1
03/22/00	Robinson Arena at Hebron Academy, Hebron, ME	1
03/22/00	Bridgton Ice Arena at Bridgton Academy, North Bridgton, ME	1
03/23/00	Sukee Arena, Winslow, ME	1
03/29/00	Portland Ice Arena, Portland, ME	1
03/30/00	Unity College Outdoor Recreation class, Unity, ME	16
04/05/00	Central Maine Inclusive Schools, Winslow, ME	50
04/10/00	Cumberland County Civic Center, Portland, ME	1
04/11/00	Visiting Nurses Services, South Portland, ME	12
04/13/00	Alfond Hockey Arena at Colby College, Waterville, ME	1
04/15/00	Family Ice Center, Sled Hockey, Falmouth, ME	10
04/24/00	University of Maine, Main Streaming class, Orono, ME	25
04/25/00	Travis Ray Ice Arena at North Yarmouth Academy, Yarmouth, ME	1
04/27/00	Husson College, Physical Therapy class, Bangor, ME	35
04/29/00	Teen Disability Conference, University of Maine, Orono, ME	40
05/03/00	Maine Parent Federation, (ITV) University of Maine, Augusta, ME	6
05/04/00	Maine Adaptive Sports & Recreation Celebrity Slam Event, University of Southern Maine, Portland, ME	100
05/05/00	Recreation Management class, University of Maine, Machias, ME	5
05/23/00	Job Corps students, Bangor, ME	8
06/01/00	Occupational Therapy Assoc. students, Kennebec Valley Technical College, Fairfield, ME	20
06/10/00	Alpha One's Vehicle Fair, Portland, ME	50
06/14/00	Multiple Sclerosis Support Group meeting, Augusta, ME	25
06/14/00	Forum Ice Arena, Presque Isle, ME	16
06/15/00	Boston Blades Sled Hockey, Coach Dale Wise, Boston, MA	1
07/26/00	Ellsworth Rotary Club, Ellsworth, ME	38

Continued - Year 2000 Rink Link Outreaches/Clinics

Date	Location, City, State	Number of Contacts
08/05/00	Maine Adaptive Sports & Recreation Wheelchair Race, Ellsworth, ME	25
08/14/00	Penobscot Job Corps Diversity Class, Bangor, ME	20
08/12/00	Camp Capella, Spina Bifida Teen Camp, Lucerne, ME	20
08/27/00	Family Ice Center, Sled Hockey, Falmouth, ME	8
09/21/00	Acadia Skating Association, Ellsworth, ME	40
09/29/00	William S. Cohen School (6grader class), Bangor, ME	22
10/05/00	Kennebec Ice Arena, Augusta, ME	14
10/27/00	CSHN & FAC Family Conference, Bangor, ME	30
11/29/00	Gail Summer	1
11/30/00	Bouchard Ice Arena, Brewer, ME	1
12/05/00	Belfast Curling Club, Belfast, ME	1
12/07/00	Bouchard Ice Arena, Brewer, ME	1
Total Number of Contacts		693

Year 2001 Rink Link Outreaches/Clinics

Date	Location, City, State	Number of Contacts
01/02/01	Belfast Curling Club, Belfast, ME	6
01/19/01	McLane Page, Weekly News, Bangor, ME	1
01/20/01	Belfast Curling Club Clinic, Belfast, ME	21
01/22/01	Peter Phair Director of Pine Tree Camp Director, Rome, ME	1
01/23/01	Bouchard Sports Center, Brewer, ME	1
01/25/01	McLane Page Weekly News, Bangor, ME	1
02/01/01	Penquis Regional Transition Board Resource Fair, Bangor, ME	20
02/06/01	Belfast Curling Club, Belfast, ME	6
02/11/01	Husson College, Bangor, ME	1
02/15/01	Colby College, Waterville, ME	1
02/24/01	Travis Roy Ice Arena, Yarmouth, ME	12
03/01/01	Sawyer Ice Arena, Bangor, ME	1
03/02/01	Maine Center for Integrated Rehabilitation, Sawyer Ice Arena, Bangor, ME	4
03/06/01	Maine Center for Integrated Rehabilitation Meeting, Bangor, ME	3
03/08/01	Husson College, Bangor, ME	1
03/14/01	Downeast Council on Transition Teen Conference, Bar Harbor, ME	15
03/15/01	Reginal Urbanowski –Husson College, Bangor, ME	1
03/16/01	The Rehabilitation Center, Brewer, ME	1
05/03/01	Maine Adaptive Sports & Recreation Celebrity Slam Event, Husson College, Bangor, ME	40
05/10/01	College Connections, Husson College, Bangor, ME	1
05/04/01	Downeast Therapy, Trenton, ME	3
06/08/01	College Connections, Husson College, Bangor, ME	2
06/09/01	Alpha One's Adapted Vehicle Fair, Portland, ME	15
06/14/01	Acadia Skating Association, Ellsworth, ME	19
06/16/01	Special Olympics, Orono, ME	25
06/17/01	Pine Tree Camp, Rome, ME	30
07/05/01	Multiple Sclerosis Society, Millinocket, ME	11
07/19/01	Penquis Regional Transition Board - Bangor, ME	3
08/07/01	St. Joseph Hospital Rehabilitation Unit, Nashua, NH	11
08/07/01	Nashua Curling Club, Nashua, NH	1
08/15/01	College Connections Meeting, Bangor, ME	2
10/25/01	American Computer Hockey Association, Boston, MA	35
10/26/01	National Sled Hockey Team (filmed practice), Boston, MA	15
10/30/01	Bucksport Senior Center, Bucksport, ME	18
11/18/01	Belfast Curling Club, Belfast, ME	10
11/25/01	Belfast Curling Club, Belfast, ME	8
11/27/01	Kiwanis Club, Orono, ME	5

Continued -Year 2001 Rink Link Outreaches/Clinics

Date	Location, City, State	Number of Contacts
11/26/01	Herman Elementary School, Herman, ME	21
12/16/01	Belfast Curling Club, Belfast, ME	9
12/22/01	Belfast Curling Club, Belfast, ME	6
Total Number of Contacts		387

Year 2002 Rink Link Outreaches/Clinics

Date	Location, City, State	Number of Contacts
01/15/02	Belfast Curling Club - Clinic- Belfast, ME	20
02/08/02	William S. Cohen School, Bangor, ME	36
02/15/02	Hampden School, Hampden, ME	3
02/21/02	Unity College, Unity, ME	12
02/22/02	Midcoast Ice Center, Rockport, ME	2
03/07/02	Forum Ice Arena, Presque Isle, ME	11
03/07/02	Loring Job Corps Center, Limestone, ME	20
03/30/02	Sawyer Ice Arena Clinics, Bangor, ME	6
04/04/02	University of Maine, Adaptability Awareness, Farmington, ME	13
04/16/02	Kennebec Valley Technical College, Fairfield, ME	18
04/23/02	Civil Rights Conference, Augusta, ME	52
07/18/02	Pine Tree Camp, Rome, ME	100
09/17/02	Brown Bag Series-presentation on Rink Link-Ft. Kent, ME	3
09/18/02	Brown Bag Series-presentation on Rink Link, Houlton & Caribou, ME	15
09/19/02	Brown Bag Series-presentation on Rink Link, Calais, ME	2
10/23/02	Family Ice Center, Falmouth, ME	8
10/30/02	Family Ice Center, Falmouth, ME	12
10/31/02	Forum Ice Arena, Presque Isle, ME	4
11/02/02	Belfast Curling Club Open House, Belfast, ME	4
11/05/02	University of Maine Rehabilitation Program, Farmington, ME	18
11/06/02	Family Ice Center, Falmouth, ME	8
12/04/02	Family Ice Center, Falmouth, ME	10
12/05/02	Maine Center for Integrated Rehabilitation Sawyer Ice Arena, Bangor, ME	4
Total Number of Contacts		381

Year 2003 Rink Link Outreaches/Clinics

Date	Location, City, State	Number of Contacts
01/08/03	Hartford Municipal Arena, White River Junction, VT	3
01/09/03	Barre BOR Rink, Barre, VT	8
01/10/03	Sled Hockey Clinic Cairns Arena, Cairns, VT	2
01/10/03	Paquette Arena, Burlington, VT	4
01/16/03	Amelia Park Ice Arena, Westfield, MA	1
02/26/03	Bangor Parks and Recreations, Bangor, ME	1
05/29/03	YMCA, Old Town, ME	3
06/03/03	University of Maine at Farmington Outreach, Farmington, ME	12
06/18/03	Family Ice Center, Falmouth, ME	15
Total Number of Contacts		49

Appendix C Selected Quotes from Testimonial Letters

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your organization Alpha One for your work in promoting ice skating and sled hockey for disabled persons. We have received many contacts (from individuals/organizations) that you have given literature to and a number have purchased sleds. Amelia Park Ice Arena in Westfield Massachusetts purchased 14 sleds and are excited about introducing ice skating and hockey in there area. We had a number of calls after you were in Las Vegas and one person you talked to from South Lake Tahoe Ice Arena in California ordered 2 sleds and was also excited about getting ice hockey and skating started in there area. Many people had no idea this exciting sport even existed until you showed them. Thanks to you and your work many people with disabilities are experiencing a brand new sport and receiving not only the joy of gliding on the ice but increasing there physical fitness. Thanks once again for the good work you and your organization is doing.

Our Warmest Regards
Mr. Laurie Howlett
President
Unique Inventions, Inc.

“...curling is a fascinating and challenging game which requires strategy, skill, some strength, some physical flexibility, and a modest amount of physical endurance. With training I think wheelchair players can achieve a truly excellent "world-class" level of play.”

“I am grateful to have been offered a chance to participate in a sport where I could learn new skills and enjoy great camaraderie and which leaves me with an infinite opportunity to improve!”

“They (Belfast Curling Club) put a welcome sign out for us. Made a special ramp. There is always someone to help me in and out of the van.”

“I look forward to learning more from you in the years to come.”

“It is my belief that our club thrives on diversity. The more diverse we are, the less alienated anyone person can feel because there is always someone that another can relate to. I truly believe that growing the diversity of the club is the key to our long term success.”

“It has been a wonderful experience this year welcoming this new group of curlers into the club. I would encourage all clubs to enable access to their ice and warm-rooms for wheelchair curlers. There are tremendous benefits to be had in doing so.”

“Developing the wheelchair curling team at the Belfast Curling Club was a wonderful experience. I have always believed that making the effort to include people with disabilities in our lives benefits our entire society, and this was yet another fresh example. I have also always found that the efforts are minimal, or non-existent, and the benefits great.”

“I have nothing but positive comments about the whole experience. Our club has new members, good press, greater visibility and new friends, too.”

“Wes, I speak not only for myself but also for the other Belfast curlers in thanking you and your program for this exciting advancement in our sport. There will always be challenges, but we’ve proven that together we can meet them and enjoy the best sport in the world together. Happy summer and we’ll see you next season.”

“Now my education has been broadened: I’ve observed them playing together and as members of a conventional team. In fact, I’ve played with them as members of my team, and against them as an entire team or as members of an opposing team. It is both a pleasure and a challenge to play with and against them.”

“This year our curling club in Belfast, Maine incorporated a group of curlers in wheelchairs. It has had a positive effect on our members as well as on people from away who have taken part in our bonspiels.”

“Our curlers on wheels have taught us how to compensate for their disability, how to help or not help them, and how to treat this as an everyday life style. They have earned our respect, and the respect of others. Their joining has been a very good thing.”

“I know for a fact that our club will begin to look at the possibilities (for improved access) with our architects and the new facilities.”

“To all at Alpha One, I would like to thank you for making my life more enjoyable. This year was my first year getting out on the ice and playing hockey. I’ve lost forty pounds (4 months) and feel in great shape. As an above knee amputee, I don’t get much cardio and now I have it for the rest (of my) life!”

“As the first year of wheelchair curling at Belfast has now drawn to a close, I feel confident in saying that our club is a better place than it was in November.”

Appendix D USCA Curling Club Survey

Due to the increased interest of wheelchair curling worldwide as well as in the United States, we are surveying curling clubs nationwide to determine the level of wheelchair accessibility available.

The purpose of this survey is to establish which clubs are already equipped to accommodate wheelchair curlers and which clubs could be with some minor changes. The purpose is not to enforce ADA regulations.

Please answer the following survey questions so we will be better equipped to assist you with the possibility of including wheelchair curlers.

1. Is your club wheelchair accessible; i.e. can a wheelchair user park and enter your facility without assistance?

Yes= 23

No = 6

If no, please explain how it isn't.

- Door does not have an automatic door opener.
- Steps to the front door and down to the ice. Doors too small (narrow) for a wheelchair.
- Wheelchairs have access to the ice but not the lounge.
- We do not have an entry that a wheelchair user can unlock and enter.

2. Is your ice sheet wheelchair accessible; i.e. can a wheelchair user access the ice surface without assistance?

Yes = 10

No = 19

If no, please explain how it isn't.

- Three steps down to landing and one step from the landing to the ice.
- Three steps between warming house and ice sheet.
- A short 3"- 4" step onto the ice.
- We do have a rear entrance that would allow access to the ice but it is bolted shut in the winter.

3. Does your club have a bathroom that is wheelchair accessible?

Yes = 21

No = 7

If no, please explain how it isn't.

- Doors aren't wide enough and there are no handrails.
- Door not wide enough.
- Stairs.
- The bathroom upstairs is accessible but getting to it is not.

4. Have you ever thought of having an open house or clinic for people with disabilities?

Yes = 9

No = 20

Comments

- We have hosted clinics for deaf children but have not considered offering other clinics yet.
- No, but we would.
- Our program is considering working with local adapted physical education teachers.
- We have had such an open house.

5. Would you like information on how to go about planning a clinic?

Yes = 16

No = 12

Comments

- May do one with another local club that is accessible.
- Not at this time.
- No wheelchair-bound individuals have ever been at our club or expressed an interest.
- Wes Smith is a member of our club so we can count on his guidance.

6. Have you had any wheelchair users wanting to curl at your club?

Yes = 2

No = 27

Comments

- Not to my knowledge.
- We had a wheelchair curler play in two of our regular leagues (an assistant pushed the chair to gain momentum).
- We are proud to have the US Wheelchair curling team based from our club. We have integrated wheelchair curlers into regular league play, funspiels and bonspiels.
- Not at present but will work in conjunction with a local rehab center which wants to become a para-Olympic training center for the east.

7. Do you know of anyone who uses a wheelchair that might like to curl?

Yes = 5

No = 25

Comments

- Many people in my agencies recreation program.
- Possibly.
- Not personally, but with the amount of good press we have received, many in the community know of the resource.
- I have started some contacts.

Comments or question section:

- I would be interested to know more about the experiences at Belfast and other such clubs.
- We are attempting an afternoon “stick” league that is aimed at seniors. We could open that league to wheelchair curlers.
- At this time we don’t have enough volunteers to support wheelchair curling.
- Good luck! We are very supportive of wheelchair curling.

This survey is designed to help you to encourage wheelchair curling at your club. Please feel free to contact wheelchair curler Weston Smith with any questions or concerns. He has many testimonial letters on wheelchair curling from members of the Belfast, Maine Curling Club that are available upon request.

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