

Outdoor Adventures and SCORE Launch Adaptive Paddling Program

By Steve Oroc

UCLA Recreation Outdoor Adventures

On Saturday, September 13, **SCORE** and UCLA Recreation's Outdoor Adventures had their third and most successful adaptive paddling event to date. SCORE is Spinal Cord Opportunities for Rehabilitation Endowment and aims to assist young people who have been injured while participating in sporting events or athletic recreation by improving their quality of life.



Five disabled paddlers along with a dozen friends of SCORE and UCLA Instructors left their wheelchairs on the dock and paddled out the Marina del Rey channel. Water is a great equalizer and kayaking is an excellent way for almost anyone to enjoy the ocean.

The fun and stable kayaks let the beginners quickly get their balance and master their paddle stroke enough to keep up with the more experienced kayakers. An observer would have been hard pressed to tell who is disabled and who is not. Under warm, sunny skies the group had a leisurely paddle out of the marina for a brief peak at the ocean before returning to the dock a little tired but elated by their adventure.

Sean Gjos, a UCLA alum and the Honorary Chairperson of SCORE, contacted UCLA Recreation in the Spring of 2003 about collaborating on adaptive recreation programs. Outdoor Adventures, UCLA

Recreation's outdoor recreation unit, seized the opportunity to expand their top quality kayaking program and put their skills and knowledge to the test.

The final piece of the puzzle fell into place when Sean recruited Mark Theobald from Santa Barbara for his experience and assistance with adapting UCLA's equipment for disabled kayakers. Mark, the author of "Kayak Diving," is also the leader of Disabled Adventurers. He has developed several simple innovations for kayaks that will allow virtually anyone to get out on the water under their own steam.

One of the ongoing successes of this joint venture is Jane Shvetsov, a third year UCLA student with Cerebral Palsy.

On the first outing in June, Jane announce that because she has better control over her legs she wanted to use them instead of paddling with her arms. With some quick adaptations to Mark's equipment Jane was out paddling for the first time ever.



This Saturday, with some more refinements to the equipment she paddled over a mile on her own. With some more improvements to the equipment and practice Jane plans to go farther and faster for the next outing. With her enthusiasm and excitement it's certain that she will succeed.

Ron Harvey is a UCLA Graduate student who, with his experience rowing, took to the water like a natural. Amy McKnight is an active tennis player who teamed with Vicki Sarantakos on a double kayak for their first foray on the water. While some of the volunteers had some previous kayak experience, many did not and the group had a pretty wide cross section of paddling ability.



Back at the UCLA dock, there were smiles all around as everyone relaxed over a cold drink and looked ahead to the next outing.