



UNH Hosts Paralympic Academy For Youth With Physical Disabilities Jan. 7

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DURHAM, N.H. -- Youth with physical disabilities can sample cross country skiing, alpine skiing, sled hockey and quad rugby at New England's first Paralympic Academy, hosted by Northeast Passage at the University of New Hampshire on Sunday, Jan. 7, 2007 (9:30 a.m. at the Whittemore Center). This exploratory, day-long event is an introduction to winter Paralympic sports for youth (ages 8 – 21) with physical disabilities and their families.

The Academy, which is free, includes introductory sport clinics, opportunities to try adaptive sports equipment, discussion forums for athletes and family members, a question and answer session with Paralympic athletes, and drawings for Olympic and Paralympic merchandise. All attendees will receive lunch and giveaways.

"This Paralympic Academy will introduce youth and families in the area to the wonderful local resources and opportunities for athletic participation and competition on a regional, national, or even international level," says Tom Carr, athletics program coordinator for Northeast Passage, a program of UNH that provides recreation opportunities for people with disabilities. "UNH sent three student-athletes to the 2006 Paralympic Winter Games in Torino, and we want to show youth with disabilities there's a chance for them to compete on the same elite level."

At the 2006 Paralympic Winter Games in Torino, UNH athletes Laurie Stephens and Tyler Walker (mono-skiers) and Taylor Chace (sled hockey player) collectively brought home two gold medals, a silver and a bronze.

"Laurie, Tyler and Taylor represent the pinnacle of Paralympic achievement," says Jill Gravink, director and founder of Northeast Passage. "With this Paralympic Academy, we hope to introduce the next generation of Paralympic and recreational athletes to the range of winter sports available to them."

The Paralympic Games is an international competition among each nation's elite athletes with physical disabilities and is second in size only to the Olympic Games. The Paralympic Games take place following the Olympic Games at the same venues and facilities. Offering competition to athletes who are blind or visually impaired, are amputees, or have motor impairments due to spinal cord injury, cerebral palsy, traumatic brain injury, or stroke, the Paralympic Games are distinct from the Special Olympics, which require participating athletes to have an "intellectual disability."

U.S. Paralympics – an organization separate from Special Olympics -- is a division of the United States Olympic Committee and was formed in 2001 to increase support for Paralympic sport in the United States. U.S. Paralympics also works with national and locally focused sport organizations, like Northeast Passage, that offer Paralympic programs to children and other developing athletes. Through these efforts, U.S. Paralympics promotes Olympic ideals throughout the American population, especially among those Americans who have physical disabilities.

Northeast Passage is a program of the University of New Hampshire and has been working with U.S. Paralympics since 2003 to promote Paralympic sports. Northeast Passage delivers disability-related health promotion and adapted sports programs throughout New England and is an affiliate of Disabled Sports USA. For more information,

visit www.nepassage.org.

For more information or to register for the Paralympic Academy, contact Northeast Passage at (603)862-0070 or northeast.passage@unh.edu.