

## Helping Veterans Recreate

### Federal grant provides access to adaptive sports

Tuesday, November 7, 2017



FORMER U.S. MARINE SAMEY MAO ON A FISHING OUTING WITH NORTHEAST PASSAGE'S ADAPTIVE SPORTS PROGRAM FOR VETERANS.

A federal grant from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will continue to provide veterans and servicemen with free access to [adaptive sports and recreation](#) through [Northeast Passage](#), the UNH-based program that serves individuals with disabilities. The \$173,000 grant was announced recently.

The funding from the VA's adaptive sports grant program allows Northeast Passage to offer such activities as alpine and

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waterskiing, archery, fly-fishing, kayaking, cycling, creative arts and gentle fitness aquatics. The year-round programs change with the seasons and are open to veterans and servicemen from all eras and of all abilities throughout northern New England. This is the fourth year Northeast Passage has received the VA funding, which this year totals \$8 million and serves upwards of 10,000 veterans around the country.

Since returning to civilian life, Samey Mao has had problems with isolation and being homebound. When he found out that Northeast Passage would not only give him things to do but that he'd be doing them with fellow veterans, life changed.

"Northeast Passage got me moving again," says Mao, who served eight years in the U.S. Marines and six years in the National Guard. His wife, Angela, also a former Marine, has joined him occasionally on outings that have included rock climbing, kayaking, hiking, and "a lot of fishing."

"I love the outdoors, and these activities with Northeast Passage have gotten me back out there," the Greenfield, New Hampshire, resident says. "And I've noticed it has made it a little easier to leave the house. If I said I was going to go kayaking on my own, it might not happen. But if a group of veterans was going, it would."

The VA adaptive sports grant has allowed for an increase in the variety and frequency of programs Northeast Passage can offer to veterans and servicemen.

"We have been working with veterans for more than 10 years," says Jill Gravink, director of Northeast Passage, which specializes in recreational therapy and adaptive sports for children, adults, service member, and veterans with disabilities. "This recreational grant allows veterans to come together around common interests and supports their overall well-being in an environment with their peers. Sharing an experience like fly fishing or kayaking or working on an art project with other veterans helps develop a

social network based on healthy activities and lets them enjoy recreation with the same independence as their nondisabled peers.””

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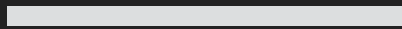
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