

FEATURE STORY:



ParaSport 306 – Building ParaSport in Saskatchewan; Saskatchewan Wheelchair Sports Association

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ParaSport 306, offered by the Saskatchewan Wheelchair Sports Association (SWSA), is designed to introduce youth and adults living with physical disabilities to a variety of adaptive sport opportunities including Athletics, Basketball, Tennis, Rugby, Skiing, and Sledge Hockey.

Due to pandemic restrictions, adaptive sports opportunities were discontinued as many participants are immune compromised. There were many obstacles to overcome to find ways to engage individuals in sport. Gyms were closed, there was limited access to equipment, we could not gather in groups for instruction, and travel was not permitted in many areas of the province.

The program moved virtually, with the advantage of reaching rural communities in Saskatchewan. The Virtual Youth Wheelchair Sports Camp focused on youth 18 and under with a physical disability. Each participant received a “Sport Camp Kit” with all the equipment they would need for the program. Equipment and instructions were provided by Provincial Sport Organizations around Saskatchewan and SWSA.

A virtual Zoom series was also developed to showcase sports and recreation opportunities across Saskatchewan. These Zoom sessions were recorded and put on SWSA’s YouTube page to be shared and used in the future. The first session was Wheelchair Sports 101 which offered a brief overview of the variety of sports, what equipment is needed, and what opportunities there are in Saskatchewan.

Ayva, a participant from Grayson shared “it was super fun, I laughed a lot and everyone seemed to enjoy it.”

Folks participated from across Saskatchewan and ranged from newly injured individuals, community participants, spinal cord injured individuals, recreation therapists, and nurses who work in rehabilitation units.

The Zoom series was so well received that it has been continued. One to two times a month the Wheelchair Sports Zoom Series focuses on a single sport or recreation activity. Sports that have been covered include Athletics, Adaptive Mountain Biking, Golf, Sailing, and Waterski. Future Zoom Series will include Tennis, Rowing, Basketball, Rugby, and many other activities.

“It was fun trying lots of new sports and seeing my friends. Golf was my favorite sport to learn,” shared Maddison, a participant from Swift Current.

This program provided opportunities for sportsmanship, friendship, sport, and fitness. The Zoom series and virtual camp provided participants an opportunity to connect with other communities and have some fun. This program has been a tremendous success. There is laughter every week and the kids are engaged and active. There is always time at the start and end of each session to get to know each other and catch up.

SWSA is exploring ways to continue offering virtual events as the province starts to re-open and restrictions are lifted. Virtual programming offers another way to connect communities around the province and share sports with everyone.

