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Over 48,400 Readers Mountain Community News on the *Positive Side*
Mountain Connection Beneficiary Program has donated \$80,000 to date

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THIS MONTH'S BENEFICIARY

— ADAPTIVE ADVENTURES — Sports transcend disabilities

By Margo Hamilton



Lt. Ed Salau lost his leg while serving in Iraq. Above, he skies at an Adaptive Adventures Ski Camp in Vail.

You might think you have to be able-bodied to participate in the rigorous fun of the great outdoors, but Adaptive Adventures cofounders Joel Berman and Matt Feeney created their inspiring program to dispel that myth.

Feeney is the Adaptive Adventures Ski School director and Colorado Ski Country USA Disabled Athlete of the Year for 2005. He suffered a spinal cord injury in June 1988, resulting in T-9 paraplegia.

"Adapting to life in a wheelchair is challenging at first, but like anything else in life, it gets easier," he said. "Obviously, I never expected to have to deal with a physical disability, but I had to accept it and move forward. Today, I guess I don't even think about it that much. There are some differences and challenges, but my life is not that different. Often the biggest challenges are physical barriers such as stairs or narrow doorways. Most other challenges are in the mind."

Joel Berman's left leg was amputated below his knee, but the loss of a limb hasn't left him immobile. He's played golf for over 30 years. "When the guys you play with are having fun, you feel less pressure and have more fun," said Berman, "I've always shot around 100, but before my leg amputation I would drive the ball 275 yards, and now it's only 175 yards. I'm still shooting the same score, just shooting straighter."

Adaptive Adventures' year-round programs provide children and adults the opportunity to overcome hardships and hindrances placed on them by amputations, paraplegia, quadriplegia, birth defects, cerebral palsy, head injuries, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, spina bifida, strokes, visual impairments and other disabilities.

Their Wounded Solider program provides young patriots and their families the opportunity to come together and move forward into the future. "It's not easy for young, strong, active soldiers to

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lose a limb or suffer from other disabilities," Joel shared. "It's a substantial life change. These soldiers, like all individuals suffering a traumatic injury, are going through a very difficult time. The sudden, traumatic change in physical ability makes service members vulnerable to psychological and emotional, as well as physical trauma, which severely impacts them and their families.

"Our goal is to show them they're still the same person in spite of their disability. We encourage them to bring a family member to go through our program with them. It unites them in a fun experience, while learning to overcome and adapt to their handicap. Thanks to our donors, wounded service members participate free of charge, including their family member," Joel said.

Adaptive Adventures is a mobile, non-resort based organization working hard to "bring programs to people" as opposed to "people to programs." Participants can Nordic ski, snowboard, cycle, hand-cycle, whitewater raft, kayak, sail, row, paddle boat, water ski, canoe, wind surf, scuba dive, wake-board, take adventure trips and participate in wheelchair sports.

Adaptive Sports for Kids provides venues specifically dedicated to children and adolescents.

Adaptive equipment and trained instructors are provided so participants can successfully partake in a wide range of sports and recreation activities.

Your financial donation will help sponsor a participant. Office supplies, new computers and a projector to provide dynamic PowerPoint presentations are also on Adaptive Adventures' wish list. A vehicle to tow their trailers is also wanted. Storage for trailers and specialized equipment is also on the wish list. Call Adaptive Adventures at 303-679-2770 or send a contribution to 27888 Meadow Drive Evergreen, CO 80439. Also visit www.adaptiveadventures.org.

Mountain Connection donates \$250 every month to a local nonprofit. To date, Mountain Connection has donated more than \$81,000.