

ADAPTIVE HIKING 101



Start & operate an adaptive hiking program with information about **all-terrain mobility equipment, funding, liability, marketing, and more!**

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INTRODUCTION

For many, the allure of hiking lies in its ability to challenge both body and mind. Hiking is an activity that demands resilience, determination, and adaptability—qualities that not only serve us on the trail but also in our everyday lives. For decades, the traditional image of *hikers* conjured up images of seasoned mountaineers scaling steep cliffs or intrepid explorers traversing remote wildernesses. However, the beauty of hiking lies in its accessibility to all, regardless of age, ability, or experience.

Adaptive hiking aims to promote inclusivity in outdoor recreation, allowing individuals with disabilities to experience the physical, mental, and emotional benefits of connecting with nature and enjoying outdoor activities.

From state and national parks, to schools and adaptive sports nonprofits, organizations around the country are using all-terrain wheelchairs to make their trails more accessible to people with disabilities. The programs are as varied as the hikers who participate.

In this ebook you will learn about:

- **Equipment** : All-terrain wheelchairs, rollators, crutches, and more
- **Funding** : Resources that can facilitate equipment purchases and programming
- **Programs** : From one-day hikes to year-round clinics and everything in between
- **Implementation** : The logistics and operations of managing an all-terrain wheelchair program



ABOUT GRIT

Put simply, GRIT believes that everyone deserves access to the outdoors.

GRIT is a mission-driven company revolutionizing outdoor mobility with reliable products, innovative designs, and genuine relationships with our customers and partners. Our flagship product, the GRIT Freedom Chair, is an all-terrain wheelchair with a patented lever drive that makes it easier for wheelchair users to navigate rugged trails, uneven terrains, and more.

GRIT was founded in 2012 by a team of mechanical engineers at MIT who set out to design mobility products for developing countries. Since then, we've expanded the Freedom Chair Family to include multiple full-sized all-terrain wheelchairs, the world's first all-terrain pediatric wheelchair, bariatric wheelchairs, and an fleet of accessories designed to improve comfort and performance as desired.

We know that just a bit of collaboration goes a long way and that *a ton* of collaboration is required for us to appropriately and effectively support the adaptive community. To that end, GRIT is a proud partner of adaptive sports organizations like [Move United](#) and [Waypoint Adventure](#), state and national parks like [Great Smoky Mountains](#), rehabilitation hospitals like [Shepherd Center](#), towns and municipalities like the [City of Reno](#), and many others.

Like the organizations designing, implementing, and maintaining their own adaptive hiking programs, we understand the value of starting small, of engaging earnestly with the adaptive community, and of existing in a constant state of growth. We learn more every day and are always ready for the next adventure.





CHAPTER 1

ADAPTIVE HIKING

WHY ADAPTIVE HIKING?

Whether scaling up thousands of feet of elevation, zipping along a river trail, or rolling through a secluded desert path, the combination of fitness and fresh air makes hiking an ideal adaptive sport for all kinds of people.

For many with disabilities—particularly those not drawn to team-based or competitive sports—hiking offers exercise, recreation, and an invaluable opportunity to socialize and connect with others. Hiking is also an approachable entry point to other recreational opportunities, events, sports, hobbies, and more.

No two hikers are the same and one of the beautiful things about adaptive hiking is that it can be easily modified for each participant. For example, a patient at a rehabilitation center who needs full support and another wheelchair user who lives 100% independently can both enjoy the same psychological, physical, and emotional benefits of adaptive hiking.

This flexibility appeals to organizations, too, especially since basic adaptive hiking programs are quick and relatively inexpensive to operate. Compare this to team-based adaptive sports that may require far more of a temporal and fiscal investment.

Starting an adaptive hiking program can provide benefits to organizations and individuals alike—and it may be easier than you think!



BENEFITS

Adaptive hiking offers benefits to both the organizations that facilitate it and the individuals who participate.

For Participants

Taking full, deep breaths of forest air. Getting your blood pumping as you work through a steep incline. Enjoying quality time and conversation with friends and family. These are just a few of the reasons why all of us, regardless of physical ability, like to get out on the trails.

The physical and mental benefits of adaptive hiking are likely clear to anyone reading this, but there's so much more, too!

- **Community Building:** Adaptive hiking brings together individuals of varying abilities, fostering camaraderie and a sense of belonging
- **Shared Experiences:** Participants bond over shared challenges and triumphs, creating a supportive community
- **Conservation Advocacy:** Hikers are exposed to the beauty of nature and often become advocates for preserving natural spaces
- **Navigation Skills:** Hiking teaches map reading, trail navigation, and orientation
- **Problem Solving:** Overcoming obstacles on trails helps hikers adapt to changing conditions in all parts of life

For Organizations

While adaptive hiking programs aim to serve individuals with disabilities, their impact extends far beyond, too. Senior citizens and even those with temporary injuries can participate in adaptive hiking programs to enjoy the outdoors. These programs also create opportunities for hikers, administrators, and everyone within or near an organization to come together, have meaningful conversations with each other, and eliminate the real and perceived barriers between them.

Organizations also leverage their adaptive hiking programs to draw interest to their other offerings. For example, participants of the adaptive hiking program at [Northeast Offroad Adventures \(NORA\)](#) can also enjoy 4x4 driving/riding, weekend retreats, an air rifle range, and more. [Promoting and marketing](#) even the smallest adaptive hiking program or adaptive equipment rental program will get your community excited about what your team and company can offer.



Ollie enjoys a trip down to the water in his all-terrain wheelchair.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

The goal of adaptive hiking is to make trails and outdoor experiences accessible and enjoyable for everyone, regardless of physical ability. While adaptive hiking programs take all shapes and sizes, they generally include one or more of the following:

Adaptive Equipment

Some programs are built around devices such as all-terrain wheelchairs. This can be done on a first-come-first-served basis at a park's visitor center, facilitated through advanced reservations, or made available for attendees of organized outings and events.

Organized Outings

These can happen weekly, quarterly, annually, or at any cadence that makes sense for your local community. These organized outings are promoted and supported opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in an adaptive hike.

Don't have your own fleet of adaptive equipment? That is okay! Partner with a local adaptive sports organization or invite participants to bring their own equipment. For your first hike, choose wide trails with gentle grades.

Trail Work and Support

For organizations that maintain their own trails, there are steps that can quickly improve accessibility. This includes signage and trail amenities in addition to the trails themselves.

Special Events

Many special adaptive hiking events mean tackling a particularly tough trail. The trail could be an obstacle course like a Spartan Race or the Camino de Santiago in Spain. These events benefit from advance preparation and dedicated time for adaptive hikers and their teams to get comfortable working together.

Your adaptive hiking program will take its own shape as your organization focuses in on what it can do best. Read on for details on finding collaborative partners and reliable equipment and putting on headline-worthy events.



WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE:

Adaptive Equipment

Adaptive hiking equipment is a category of specialized gear that helps individuals with disabilities navigate trails safely and comfortably. Because different hikers will require different kinds and degrees of support, adaptive hiking equipment takes many forms. Below are just some of the kinds of equipment available today:

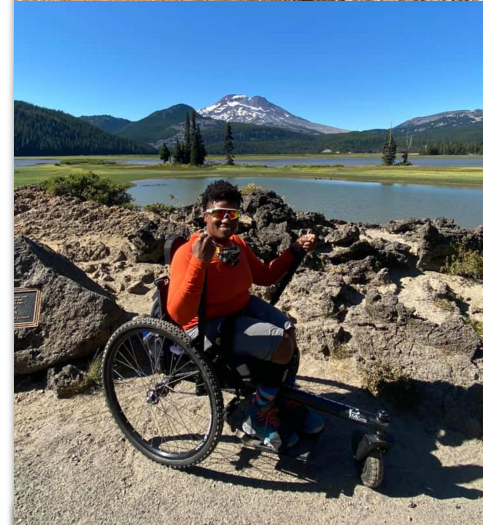
- **All-Terrain Wheelchairs:** Designed for off-road use, these rugged chairs—manual or motorized—offer better traction and stability than standard wheelchairs.
- **Hiking Poles & Crutches:** Adjustable poles and crutches, like *SideStix*, provide balance and shock absorption with interchangeable feet for various terrains.
- **All-Terrain Rollators & Walkers:** Featuring larger wheels, hand brakes, and built-in seating, all-terrain rollators ([like this one](#)) provide extra support on uneven paths.

How to Offer Your Equipment

Whichever equipment you decide to offer, there are a few ways to make it available to the public. Some organizations have their equipment available on a first-come-first-served basis, while others bring it out for specific outings and events. The choice really depends on the structure of your organization and what kind of programming you want to provide.

Start Small

We'll talk in more detail about equipment throughout this ebook, but your organization may need to start with a couple of pieces of equipment before investing in a larger fleet. Start with an affordable product that will provide the most benefit to your organization. Then, add to the fleet from there.



Above and middle: Adaptive equipment comes in many varieties and different people use different kinds of equipment. Below: A hiker uses SideStix forearm crutches to keep her balance on the trail.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE:

Organized Outings

Organized outings come in a wide range of frequency and scope, from low-key weekly meetups to large, coordinated, annual events. Let's review a few examples.

Regular Trail Rides

The Universal Access Program, at the Massachusetts' Department of Conservation and Recreation, runs hiking programs from April through October at different parks, forests, and reservations across the state. Each hike has adaptive equipment such as all-terrain wheelchairs, crutches, and walkers, plus staff to support. Each hike also comes with a different theme or lesson, so participants might focus on communication, or learn about the principles of Leave No Trace. By taking their hikes to various locations around the state, this program is able to serve a large population with a core team and equipment.

Adaptive Hiking Days

Catalyst Sports, Kampgrounds of America (KOA), and Great Smoky Mountains National Park have joined forces to offer adaptive hiking days, during which participants join rangers and volunteers to use adaptive equipment like the GRIT Freedom Chair in the national park. This collaboration allows individuals with disabilities to experience the beauty of the Great Smoky Mountains like never before.

By providing adaptive equipment, these organizations ensure that participants, along with their families and friends, can hike together in inclusive, outdoor experiences. This initiative not only opens up the trails to more people but also demonstrates a strong commitment to accessibility and community engagement.

Between May and October, the Pennsylvania Center for Adapted Sports (PCAS) also hosts weekly adaptive cycling meetups. PCAS brings its staff, a handful of volunteers, and its trailer of adaptive equipment to each meetup. Whether a participant is looking to test out or enjoy a handcycle, recumbent bike, tandem cycle, or other piece of equipment, the PCAS makes sure they can participate. These events promote physical fitness and community health, and also help foster a sense of camaraderie and community for anyone who attends.



On an adaptive hike with MA DCR, a park ranger stops to share information about the wildlife in the area, including the small turtle he holds in his hands!

Photo Credit: MA DCR.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE:

Organized Outings (Cont.)

Annual Hikes

Yearly events can be a great way to make a splash, and often serve as powerful fundraising opportunities.

What's Your Everest is an annual event run by the Colorado nonprofit, No Barriers, that brings individuals of all abilities together to push, pull, and support each in their efforts to reach their own personal Everest. More than just a hike, this event empowers people to celebrate the life-changing work that No Barriers brings to their community.

Adaptive Sports Partners, based in New Hampshire, hosts an annual *Sunrise Ascent on Mt. Washington*. Before sunrise, athletes and their teams ascend 7.6 miles up the Mt. Washington Auto Road to the summit at 6,288 feet. Each team includes an athlete with a disability and a team of registered crew members who support the climb and fundraise.

Other Recreation

Sometimes hiking is a key part of enjoying another outdoor activity. For example, individuals going camping, kayaking, and fishing may need to get around rough terrain. We see this often in winter, too, while folks are getting to and from chairlifts and lodges. Embracing these opportunities can make for a great multi-sport adventure!



Above: A team of volunteers and hikers head toward the summit during What's Your Everest.

Below: Evita, dressed for the rapids, makes her way to her raft in her all-terrain wheelchair.

Photo Credit: No Barriers USA (above), Evita R. (below)



WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE:

Trail Work & Support

Gone are the days when wheelchair users were limited to short, paved, and unexciting paths. While there's a lot of work to be done, trail work is one of the ways parks around the country have been working to make their sites more accessible to people with disabilities.

Building an accessible trail is a significant undertaking. Not only does it require a thorough understanding of the terrain and materials, environmental and conservation risks, costs, and community engagement, accessible trails must meet certain standards for width, grade, and more.

The complex nature of the job means trail building typically involves multiple organizations working together. For example, when the Legacy Parks Foundation in Tennessee wanted to develop 42 acres of forested land, they tagged in many others to help do it correctly. This successful trails coalition involved the City of Knoxville, Knox County, Trinity Health Foundation, East Tennessee Community Design Center, and others. Together, this coalition created Knoxville's first all-access trail that specifically for people using adaptive equipment.

Left: Tyler gives a thumbs-up from an excavator before starting some trailwork. Right: Carly, in her GRIT chair, and a team of assistants work on an adaptive hiking trail near Knoxville, Tennessee.

Photo Credit: Tyler R. (left), Catalyst Sports (right)



WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE: Signage

Because organizing a multi-partner coalition is typically beyond the scope of an adaptive hiking program, many adaptive hiking programs [transport their equipment](#) to existing trails and park areas. This symbiotic relationship allows both the adaptive hiking program and the park to improve—improving signage for accessibility is often a fantastic place to start.

Ideal signage shouldn't just rate a trail as “easy,” “difficult,” or even “accessible”; instead, it should provide basic information that empowers people to make their own decisions. This basic information includes: Total Trail Length, Minimum Trail Width, Overall Grade, Average and Max Cross-Slope, Surface Type(s), Maximum Incline, Accessible Bathroom Locations, Accessible Parking Locations, and Known Trail Damage or Blockages. With this information, hikers (adaptive or able-bodied) can decide *for themselves* if that is the right trail for them.

Go Online!

If seasonal changes, trail improvements, and policy updates happen faster than your organization or park can make new signage, make the information available online! This will be easier to update, improve, and maintain over time and may help you reach an even larger audience. For example, [Beaufort County in South Carolina](#) partnered with [AccessNow](#) to create informative information about their trails, complete with photos, maps, and detailed descriptions. Another tip: Near the trailhead, post a QR code routed to your website. That way, anyone ready to hike can get the most up-to-date trail information.

Below, two riders stop at trailheads before rolling onward!

Photo Credit: Nate A. (left), Dave B. (right)



WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE:

Special Events

100 kilometers on the Camino de Santiago. Conquering obstacles on a Spartan Race. Venturing to Easter Island. These are just a few of the special events that put their own twists on *adaptive hiking*.

Obstacle Course Races

Events like Spartan Races and Tough Mudders require participants to tackle 5 or more kilometers of extreme terrain and a dynamic mix of physical challenges. Athletes using wheelchairs often compete as part of a team, and it is important that the athletes use equipment ready for this kind of aggressive use.

Pilgrimages

Accessible Camino offers specialized trips along the final 100 kilometers of the Camino de Santiago, tailored for individuals with mobility challenges. These trips, organized by Justin Skeesuck and Patrick Gray, provide wheelchair-accessible routes, accommodations, and support to ensure a comfortable and fulfilling pilgrimage experience.

Destination Travel

Wheel the World offers accessible travel experiences for people with disabilities, providing tailored trips, accommodations, and activities that accommodate mobility, hearing, vision, and cognitive needs. They partner with local guides and offer adaptive sports, cultural tours, and more in destinations like Mexico, Canada, South America, Egypt, and beyond.



Above: Adaptive athletes sprint off of the start line at a Spartan Race. Middle: The Accessible Camino team pushes through their trek toward the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. Below: Four hikers pose for a photo at Easter Island, Chile. Photo Credit: GRIT (above), I'll Push You (middle), Wheel the World (below)



CHAPTER 2

GETTING STARTED

THREE FIRST STEPS

Operating an adaptive hiking program can provide benefits to organizations and individuals alike—and it may be easier than you think! Here are three things you can do to get started today:

1. Connect with Other Organizations

As you read this, organizations around the world are actively setting up adaptive hikes—and they'd love to hear from you. The organizations already running their adaptive hiking programs have likely asked many of the same questions you're asking and have made meaningful B2B connections. You don't necessarily need to reinvent the wheel to start your own program, and assistance will only improve your planning.

Reach out to a local adaptive sports or recreational group ([Move United](#) is a great place to start) to tell them about your goals, ask them what they've already tried, find out what worked for them and what didn't, and perhaps offer the chance for them to join you in a collaborative project.

2. Speak with Adaptive Hikers

As you set up this first adaptive hike, there is nothing more valuable than the experience and feedback of adaptive hikers themselves. There are realities about being an adaptive hiker and using mobility equipment that only those who have experienced it first-hand will be able to articulate. Simple questions like “What would **you** want to see in an adaptive hiking program” can put you in the right direction.

3. Take Stock of Your Resources

What do you have and what do you need? Perhaps you manage a park and have some passionate volunteers, but you don't have any equipment to offer visitors. You could team up with an adaptive sports group that already has equipment and would love to use your trails. Or you could spool up those volunteers to fundraise for your own equipment.



A photo from a successful (and laughter-filled) adaptive hiking event that resulted from collaboration between [Challenged Athletes Foundation](#), [Sports Basement](#), and [UCSF](#)! Photo

Credit: Challenged Athletes Foundation

TIPS FOR CONNECTING

Learning from others is a great way to build your knowledge and expand your ideas about what your programming could look like.

Start Local

Connecting with a local organization has some advantages. For starters, it is highly likely that you could meet—wait for it—in person! No video chats, no phone calls, no emails, just real-life connection and collaboration. You could visit their park and check out their accessible trail(s), see how they store their all-terrain wheelchairs, or even join them for an adaptive hike.

Find Common Ground

When you're ready to expand your radius, look for organizations that have something in common with yours, whether in mission, structure, target demographic, etc. Being aligned in one or more of these areas will make it easier for you to get to work on the fun stuff.

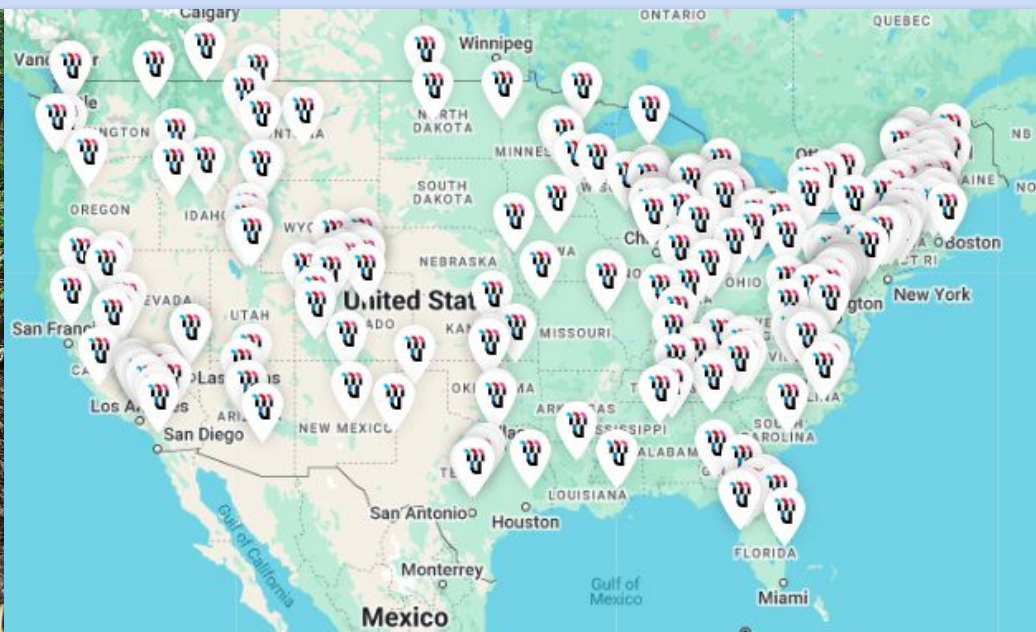
Then, Find Your Differences

Remember that the best kind of partner or connection will be one that can offer something your organization doesn't. For example, if funding isn't a concern but you want to connect with members of the adaptive community, check out [Move United](#) (see more on the following page). If you're in the opposite situation, check out the [funding section of this ebook, here](#) for some tips.

Plan, Redesign, Reiterate

Adaptive hiking partnerships thrive when they continually incorporate new insights, technologies, and additional partnerships. [Later in this ebook](#), we'll discuss various program types and what it takes to run a successful adaptive hiking program.

Left: The NORA team is joined by riders Tyler and Tyler to discuss design improvements for an adaptive hiking trail. Right: A map of the Move United partner locations in the Continental USA. Photo Credit: NORA (left), Move United (right)



»» MOVE UNITED

If you're looking to connect with adaptive organizations, adaptive athletes, and meet other like-minded people, look no further than [Move United](#). Since 1956, Move United has aimed to ensure that "everyone, regardless of ability, has equal access to sport" and they have become a tremendous resource for the community.

Move United creates collaborative and specialized opportunities for its 200+ Member Organizations. Becoming a Move United Member gives organizations and individuals alike the opportunity to meet, connect with, and learn from others pursuing similar goals. Here are some of the ways Move United strengthens the community:

- **Connecting Organizations:** Members can network, access job and event listings, receive discounts, and attend events.
- **Education & Training:** The Move United Education Hub offers resources and training to help organizations build successful adaptive sports programs.
- **Awards:** Recognizes individuals and organizations making lasting contributions to adaptive sports.
- **Conferences & Events:** Annual conferences, competitions, and fundraisers bring members together for collaboration and growth.
- **Warfighters:** Provides free adaptive sports programs for service members and veterans with permanent physical disabilities.
- **Grants:** Offers over \$2.5 million in funding annually, with rolling applications.
- **Volunteers:** More than 20,000 volunteers support Move United chapter events each year.

Photo Credit: Move United



[Learn More](#)

[Click here to check them out!](#)



CHAPTER 3

THE GRIT FREEDOM CHAIR

THE GRIT FREEDOM CHAIR

The GRIT Freedom Chair is a manual, all-terrain wheelchair that allows individuals and organizations alike to enjoy the outdoors like never before. Its patented lever drive and user-centric design allow riders to tackle various terrains and adventures with or without assistance.

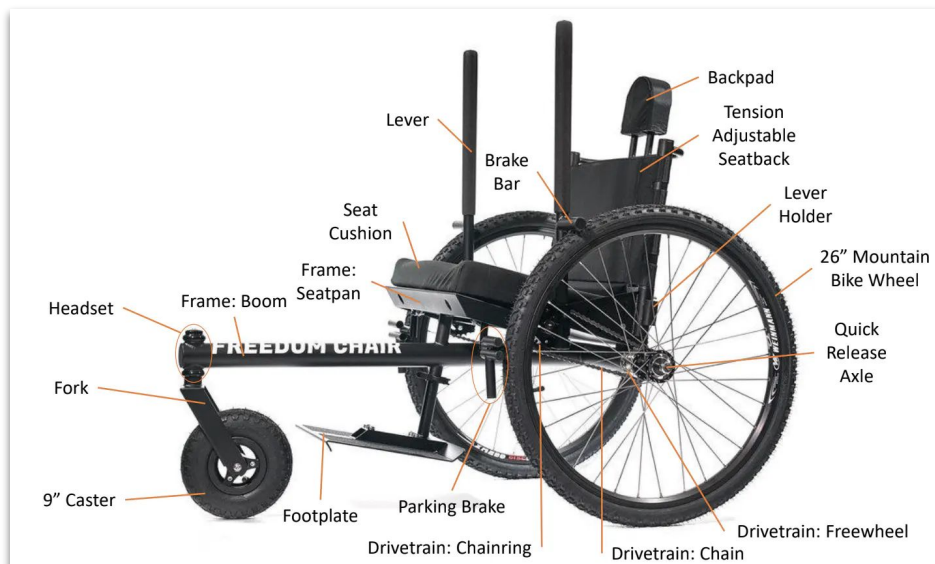
Key Features

GRIT was founded by a team of mechanical engineers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) united by the goal of creating a better all-terrain wheelchair. After years of vigorous prototyping and development, here are just a few of the distinguishing features of the GRIT Freedom Chair in use today:

- **A Patented Lever-Drive System:** When self-propelling, riders engage one or both levers that are connected to the GRIT chair's drive system. This lever-drive is twice as physically efficient as pushing hand-rims on a standard wheelchair.
- **Bike Parts:** Rugged, off-the-shelf mountain bike parts that interface with GRIT's custom-engineered parts ensure trail readiness, easy customization, and affordable lifetime maintenance.
- **Quick to Transport, Travel, and Store:** GRIT engineers design every model of chair to be quick and easy to disassemble. This allows riders to get to/from the trailhead and store the chair when not in use.



Photo Credit: Patrick & Colleen Lang
(above), Ben C. and family (below)



THE GRIT FREEDOM CHAIR

(Cont.)

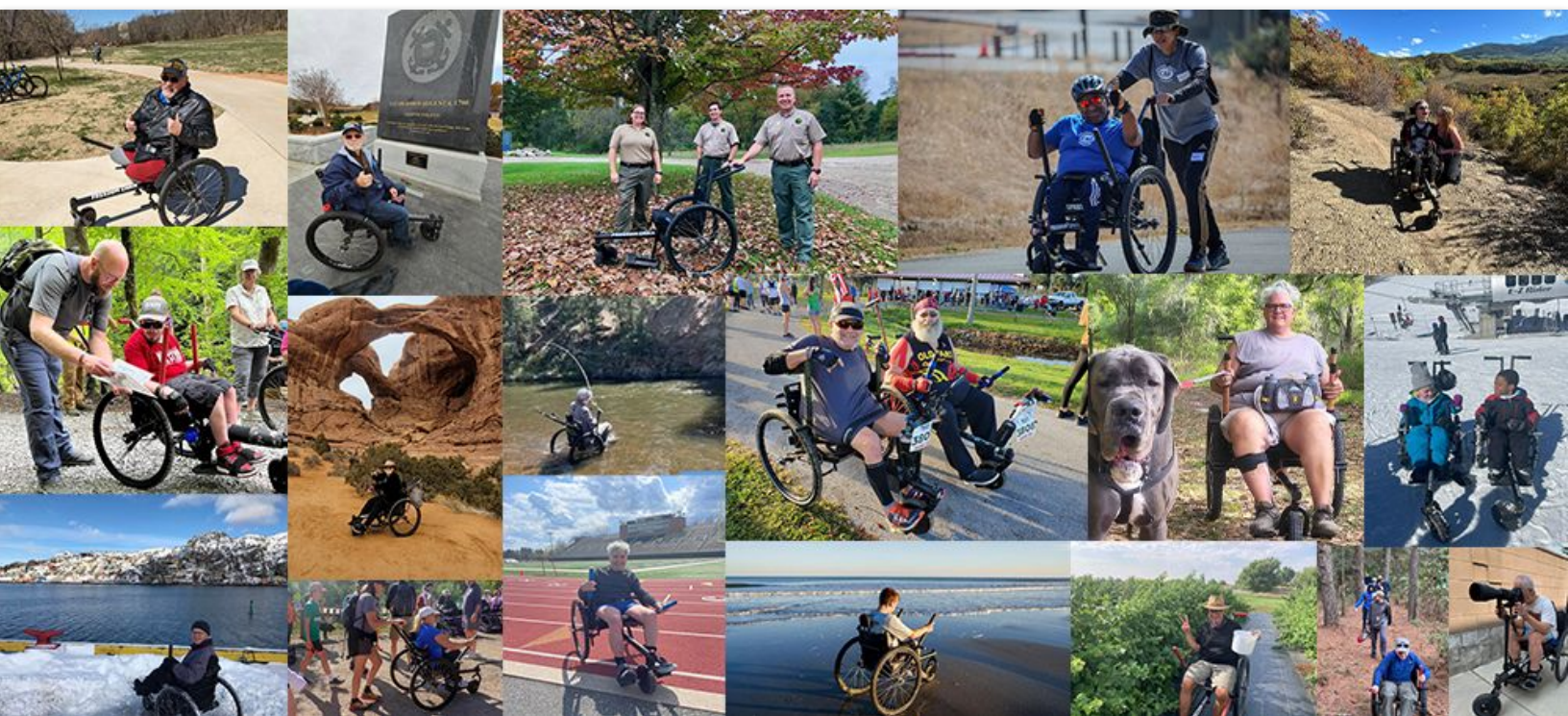
GRIT Chairs for Various Shapes, Sizes, and Ages

Because everybody, every *body*, and every hike is unique, GRIT believes it is crucial to make chairs that are comfortable for as many riders as possible. To that end, the GRIT Freedom Chair family now includes three adult sizes, two pediatric sizes, and one bariatric size. We offer six unique models and over twenty accessories designed specifically for safety, comfort, and achieving peak performance.

Support to and from the Trailhead

GRIT Freedom Chairs all come with a two-year warranty and access to an industry leading Rider Support Team. We are of course available to answer questions and make sure the ride is going smoothly, but are also thrilled to work with our customers to ensure safe programming, smooth operations, and effective execution of their goals.

GRIT believes in its products and in the people who use them. Let's get outside, one lever-push at a time! We'll meet you at the trailhead.





CHAPTER 4

TYPES OF PROGRAMS

TYPES OF PROGRAMS

Every year, more and more organizations begin and develop their adaptive programming. Adaptive sports organizations are certainly the most active, but parks, schools, and other organizations aren't far behind!

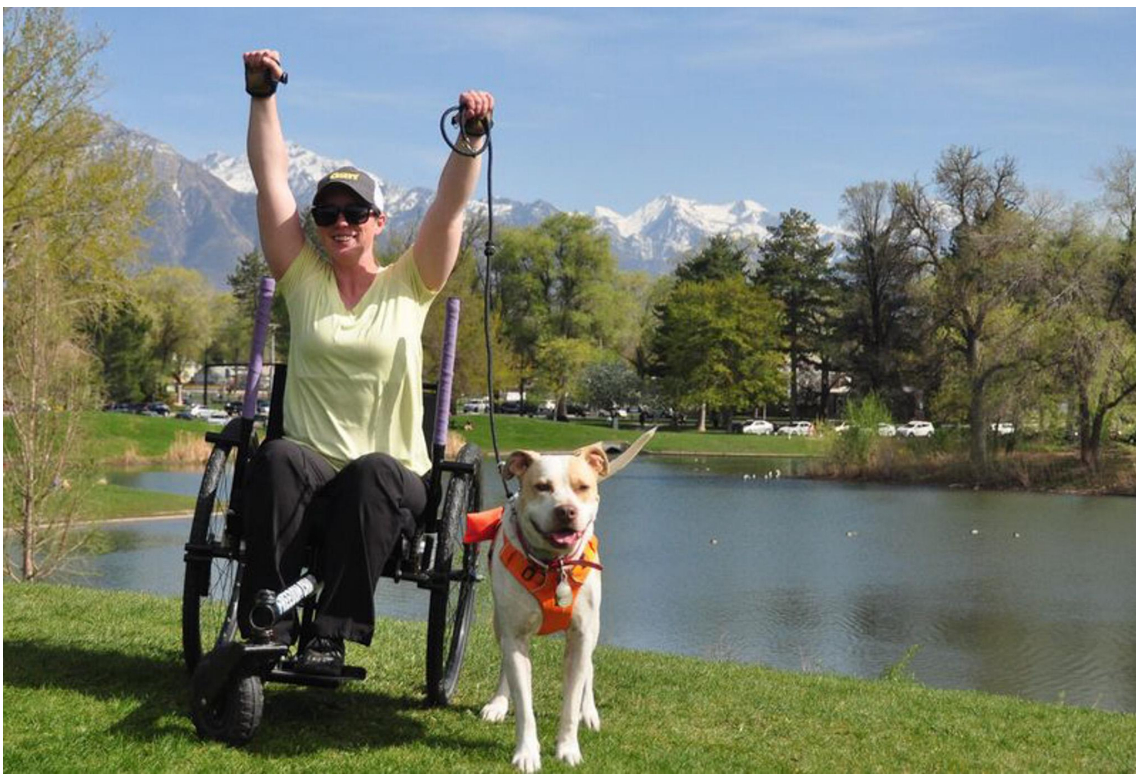
Different organizations have different goals for the adaptive hiking they offer, and also bring different strengths and weaknesses. For this reason, partnerships between multiple organizations are common and often crucial.

For example, a park system may have an incredible network of beautiful trails to explore, but little experience with volunteers who can assist adaptive hikers. On the flipside, an adaptive sports organization might have a fleet of equipment, but might also need access and guidance on which trails to use.

Categories

In this chapter, we have grouped organizations into categories and highlighted specific examples within each. We encourage you to learn from organizations similar to yours, but also to explore other categories as well.

- **Adaptive Sports Organizations:** Nonprofits with a range of programs.
- **Parks:** All sizes, including state and national parks.
- **Schools:** Both K-12 and university settings
- **Towns & Cities:** Organize programs at the municipal level.
- **Rehabilitation Programs:** Adaptive hiking helps patients prepare for independence
- **Other:** Private businesses, camps, and more!



ADAPTIVE SPORTS ORGANIZATIONS

Adaptive sports organizations are dedicated to promoting and facilitating sports and physical activities for people with disabilities. Their mission is to create inclusive opportunities and ensure individuals of all abilities can engage in various sports. The ways in which they engage with that mission varies by organization.

While some adaptive sports programs have focused on traditional, competitive, team-oriented sports like basketball and rugby, many are expanding into general outdoor recreation and incorporating adaptive hiking, cycling, and more. These offerings are attractive to participants less interested in competing against others and more focused on personal growth, fitness, and outdoor adventure.

Photo Credit: Mass.gov



»» WAYPOINT ADVENTURE

Through scheduled hiking days, short-and-long-term equipment rentals, and a wide range of educational programs, Waypoint Adventure offers a comprehensive, year-round model for adaptive recreation.

Waypoint Adventure—located in both Lexington, Massachusetts, and Black Mountain, North Carolina—operates one of the most active and popular adaptive hiking programs in the nation.

Founded in 2010, their mission is to awaken youths and adults with disabilities to their willful spirit through the power of adventure.

Signing up for events at Waypoint is as easy as [going to their website](#), and after attending a Waypoint Adventure event as a volunteer or participant, you'll understand why folks return again and again!

The Waypoint Adventure team is overflowing with passionate, creative, and down-to-earth people, many of whom specialize in equipment management, grant writing, project and trip management, education, and other disciplines. The Waypoint team works together to create truly memorable experiences for their participants and volunteers.

Their adaptive equipment is stored on-site at Waypoint Adventure's two locations. Their Lexington, MA, location shares a property with the Coting School, established in 1893 as the first school in the US dedicated to children with disabilities.

Photo Credit: Waypoint Adventure



» SUMMIT ADAPTIVE SPORTS

Summit Adaptive Sports arranges adaptive hiking days, during which participants with disabilities join staff and volunteers on hikes. They rely on trained volunteers and serve participants with both physical and intellectual disabilities.

Summit Adaptive Sports offers year-round adaptive sport opportunities, from adaptive lessons in skiing and snowboarding during the winter, to kayaking and SUP in the summer. Throughout the year, they hike, mountain bike, and play disc golf at locations across Connecticut.

Adaptive equipment is stored on-site at Ski Sundown, in a covered building with other equipment. GRIT Freedom Chairs are transported by car to off-site hiking events.

Summit Adaptive Sports places a strong emphasis on volunteer training. All volunteers must fill out a volunteer registration form and complete Safe Sport Training, a background check, and liability waivers. Volunteers and staff work alongside participants and any equipment (by hiking with them and assisting when necessary).

“I highly recommend Summit Adaptive to get you out to enjoy all activities. They will support you in every way. Summit Adaptive has exceptionally well-trained volunteers, to support you in any way you need.”

—Cindi, Summit Adaptive Sports event attendee

Photo Credit: Summit Adaptive Sports



» ADAPTIVE SPORTS NORTHWEST

Adaptive Sports Northwest (ASNW) in Portland, Oregon, offers a variety of mobility aids, including handcycles and GRIT Freedom Chairs, while hosting events for individuals with physical and visual disabilities.

Adaptive Sports Northwest (ASNW) offers a robust fleet of adaptive devices—handcycles, GRIT Freedom Chairs, power chairs, indoor-sport chairs, and more—to members and the general public. They also host sports clinics, competitive events, recreational events, and aim to “provide fitness, recreation, and competitive sport to anyone with physical and visual disabilities.”

ASNW is located in Portland, Oregon, and they store their equipment on site. A dedicated Equipment Manager and her staff keep the equipment in tip-top shape. Everyone at ASNW undergoes training focused on adaptive recreation, safety procedures, and how to assist participants with various physical needs effectively.

Interested in signing up for an ASNW event? They make it super easy! See their [equipment rental form here](#). Similarly, anyone interested in volunteering at an ASNW event can [sign up on their website, here](#). If you’re looking to start a similar program, volunteering with an organization like ASNW can be a phenomenal way to get familiar with the equipment and operations.

“Two very good friends took me up to Timberline Lodge on Mt. Hood in Oregon on a spectacularly beautiful day! With their help pushing me up the steep and over rocks and helping me brake on the downhill, we did about a mile of the Pacific Crest Trail. Thanks again to Adaptive Sports Northwest for lending me the Freedom Chair!”

—Joel, pictured at right

Photo Credit: Joel S.



Photo Credit: Joel S.



PARKS

Adaptive hiking and parks go hand-in-hand with each other! Parks that run adaptive hiking programs include massive national parks that organize ranger-led adaptive hikes, state park systems that make adaptive equipment available statewide, and municipal and private parks looking to make their facilities more accessible.

Parks will often partner with local organizations to assist with the maintenance and storage of their adaptive equipment and/or with the organization of events and trail management.

Every month, more state and national parks are incorporating all-terrain wheelchairs into their programming. Many parks offer these wheelchairs at visitor centers, trailheads, or through advanced reservation systems, ensuring that visitors can enjoy hiking, wildlife viewing, and other outdoor activities. Parks like [Great Smoky Mountains National Park](#) and [Beaufort County](#)'s passive parks provide these wheelchairs to improve outdoor accessibility and park access for all.

Left: Lisa takes a photo before enjoying the “inaccessible” area with her all-terrain wheelchair!

Right: A young rider leads her family on a hike through a local park.



»» GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

In 2023, Great Smoky Mountains National Park (GSMNP) began its adaptive hiking program! Through equipment rentals and scheduled hikes, GSMNP is setting the standard for adaptive hiking programs at national parks.

Through partnership with Knox County, Catalyst Sports, Kampgrounds of America (KOA), and Friends of the Smokies, GSMNP has established a terrific adaptive hiking program. Their multi-layered partnerships allow each organization to contribute where they are best suited so that, together, they can run a fantastic adaptive hiking program.

Since their program's inception, GSMNP has organized adaptive hiking days, during which participants can use adaptive equipment like the GRIT Freedom Chair to explore the park and talk with rangers about the cultural and historical significance of the park. Visitors can also rent one of GSMNP's all-terrain wheelchairs for their own personal exploration!

Here's a 10,000-foot view of how the GSMNP collaboration works. The park first secured funding for its all-terrain equipment through a grant from the National Environmental and Education Foundation (NEEF) and through help from the Friends of the Smokies. Since receiving and assembling equipment, they store it at Catalyst Sports locations near the park, where both Catalyst Sports and Kampgrounds of America maintain the equipment.

For adaptive hiking days, members from the above organizations and Knox County work together to organize impactful, educational, and inclusive experiences for visitors and volunteers. Every group plays an important part.

Photo Credit: Catalyst Sports



“By offering these kinds of programs, the Great Smoky Mountains National Park is really making sure that everybody in the community has the opportunity to participate and enjoy nature and be active.”

—Mark Bogosian, Director of Engagement,
Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation

»» TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) provides adaptive equipment across many state parks, shuttling gear as needed to improve accessibility, with maintenance handled by staff and rangers. Visitors can reserve equipment online or through individual park offices on a first-come, first-served basis.

TPWD has strategically placed GRIT Freedom Chairs and other adaptive equipment at state parks across their state. TPWD's adaptive equipment program gives visitors improved access to the tremendous amount of research and collected history available at each of their state parks.

They often transport equipment from one park to another to meet demand. After initially starting with just a few all-terrain chairs, they have since expanded and added equipment to many more of their parks. With 95 state parks in Texas, there's a lot of ground to cover!

Most equipment is stored at each park's visitor center, and it's maintained by TPWD staff and park rangers, who ensure that the equipment is in good working condition before each use. TPWD also relies on volunteers and staff to report issues or concerns with the equipment.

Participants can sign up for the program through the Texas Parks and Wildlife website or by contacting the office at their desired park.

“Paving the environment is not our goal. Adaptive equipment is a way to include and welcome people with disabilities into spaces they may have historically not been able to access.”

—Chris Meza, TPWD Accessibility Program
Specialist



Above: Visitors enjoy a sunset ride at a Texas park. Below: Park rangers share some laughs while testing out their new all-terrain wheelchair.

»» BEAUFORT COUNTY PASSIVE PARKS

Beaufort County Passive Parks Department preserves open spaces for public use and offers free all-terrain wheelchairs, stored at libraries and a park office for online reservation. Trail accessibility details are available through their partnership with AccessNow.

Passive parks preserve open, undeveloped spaces for public use, unlike other parks with activity-specific features (e.g., tennis/pickleball courts, playgrounds, etc.). Beaufort County enhances accessibility by offering free all-terrain wheelchairs for visitors to enjoy these natural areas.

These open-concept parks don't usually feature visitor centers, which is where other some other parks store their adaptive equipment. Instead, Beaufort County stores their all-terrain wheelchairs at two public libraries and a separate park department office building. Visitors can reserve the chairs online and then take them to the park(s) of their choice. Click here to see the form visitors use to reserve the chairs.

Beaufort County Passive Parks have also partnered with AccessNow to make accessibility-related information about their trails and parks available to the public. Check out this map of their Widgeon Point Preserve Nature Trail!

“Everybody should be able to have the opportunity to enjoy that sense of peace without the noise of traffic, the parking lot, or any of that ambient noise that clouds our daily lives. I was tired of watching people come to our park just to sit in their cars.”

—Stefanie Nagid, Passive Parks Manager, Beaufort County, SC



Representatives from Beaufort County document their hike with the GRIT Freedom Chair around their passive parks. These photos are available on their AccessNow map.

SCHOOLS & CAMPS

By creating adaptive hiking programs and using pediatric adaptive equipment like the GRIT Junior for nature walks, longer hikes, field trips, and community events, schools and camps can:

- **Dissolve and eliminate stigmas** with the use of adaptive equipment
- **Create opportunities for kids** of all abilities to collaborate, communicate, and meaningfully connect with their peers.
- **Foster safe and equitable dialogue** about Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) between kids and adults.
- **Promote a healthy respect and curiosity about the outdoor world** (leave those screens behind)!
- Show kids that using or assisting with the use of **adaptive hiking equipment is outright fun!**

Schools and camps that use all-terrain wheelchairs in their programming often partner with local community organizations to create media and marketing, conduct research, and more. Check out the below video for an example!

Left: This video created by the Bullitt Advanced Math and Science Program helps visitors of the Bernheim Arboretum and Research Forest get the most out of their all-terrain wheelchair rental. Right: A young wheelchair user participates in an outdoor obstacle course in her all-terrain wheelchair.



» FALMOUTH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Falmouth Public Schools provides all-terrain adaptive equipment for students to use on field trips and outdoor lessons, while initiatives like the Falmouth Outdoor Learning Project further promote nature-based education and community engagement.

Making outdoor, adaptive equipment available to its students is just one way the District of Falmouth, MA, proves its commitment to getting its community outdoors. Under the supervision of Superintendent Lori Duerr, Falmouth has taken many steps toward improving outdoor accessibility for both its students and community at large.

In 2020, members of the Rotary Club of Falmouth Cape Cod founded the Falmouth Outdoor Learning Project, which has the goal of keeping children engaged, enriched, and safe through outdoor recreation. As the Outdoor Learning Project says on their site, “Outdoor learning reduces the burden on indoor classrooms while providing fresh air, hands-on learning opportunities, and the health benefits associated with increased access to nature.” This group has even partnered with the 300 Committee Land Trust and the Falmouth Road Race to make a bigger impact.

One of the ways Falmouth Public Schools uses their all-terrain wheelchairs is for field trips to destinations that aren’t very accessible. Whether on a field trip or an outdoor lesson on school grounds, offering this equipment ensures that every student can enjoy the activity, regardless of the terrain.

“As an educator for over 10 years, I’ll say: There is little that is more negatively impactful to a young person than the feeling that they don’t fit in or are being left out. This situation doesn’t change with activities that occur outdoors.”

—Carmela Mayeski, Learning Partnerships Specialist, Falmouth Public Schools



“It is exceedingly important to ensure every student has equitable opportunities to participate in all school activities in meaningful ways. The GRIT Freedom Chair provides full access during outdoor activities for our students who require adaptive equipment.”

—Lori Duerr, Superintendent of Falmouth Schools

TOWNS & CITIES

Cities and towns oversee much of an area's accessibility efforts, including but not limited to trail building and maintenance, the construction of accessible playgrounds, event hosting and planning, and more.

These large, governing bodies have unique access to funding opportunities, specialized personnel, and equipment, making them a crucial part in increasing the indoor and outdoor accessibility of their communities.

In this section, we'll highlight some cities and towns that offer adaptive equipment and programming for adaptive hiking, too! No different than a small, grassroots organization, cities and towns often start small with a few pieces of adaptive equipment, but they can then scale quickly.

Read on to learn more about some of the fantastic city-run adaptive hiking programs in operation today.

In partnership with [High Fives Foundation](#) and [Sky Tavern](#), the City of Reno put on a "Community Bike Day," where participants could use adaptive equipment and celebrate trail accessibility in Reno. [Read more here!](#)

Photo Credit: High Fives Foundation



»» THE CITY OF RENO, NEVADA

The City of Reno provides adaptive equipment, sports programs, and expert training for its team. They even participated in a 2024 exchange with Nepalese athletes to promote accessibility!

The City of Reno has a wide range of adaptive equipment available for public use, including adaptive ebikes, recumbent bikes, attachments for manual chairs, GRIT Freedom Chairs, and more.

Members of the community can join any of Reno's adaptive recreation programs like their wheelchair rugby team, wheelchair basketball team, sled hockey team, Dance for All, and more. They even offer a "Wheelchair Skills and Drills" program for sport-specific guidance.

The city enlists adaptive recreation experts like April Wolfe, Therapeutic Recreation Specialist, to train their staff and volunteers, present and speak on behalf of the city at seminars and conferences, and keep the equipment rolling. They regularly collaborate with equipment vendors to offer the resources necessary for safe and fun public use.

In 2024, the City of Reno partnered with PH International to host ten Nepalese adaptive sports participants as part of an exchange program. Participants engaged in seminars, community service, and workshops centered around adaptive sports and universal, outdoor accessibility. This exchange program represents one amazing way a city can use its adaptive hiking program to achieve a greater goal.



Photo Credit: City of Reno, Nevada

“The City of Reno offers a number of adaptive recreation programs, including [...] our wheelchair sports like wheelchair basketball and wheelchair rugby, a variety of veterans' programs including our veterans fitness program, our cycling program, and our military sports camp. And we rent all kinds of equipment through our equipment rental program!”

—April Wolfe, Therapeutic Recreation Specialist, City of Reno

» THE CITY OF DENTON, TEXAS

The City of Denton, Texas, uses all-terrain wheelchairs to make outdoor events and programs accessible to individuals with mobility challenges.

The City of Denton, Texas, uses all-terrain wheelchairs to enable community members with mobility challenges to participate in events like "Teen Nature Day," "Garden Workdays," and the "Great Backyard Bird Count."

Managed by the Denton Parks and Recreation Department, their GRIT Freedom Chairs provide greater accessibility for outdoor programs, including hiking and trail activities. Participants can request the chair when registering for city-hosted events, ensuring availability for specific dates.

"For these citizens who want to participate in our outdoor nature programs, it provides more opportunities for hiking and traveling on trails," says Leisure Services Program Area Manager, Megan Thomas, in an interview with Denton County Magazine.

Denton has continued its efforts by including features like accessible playgrounds, informative signage, and accessible water fountains.<https://dentonrc.com/>

“By having the chair, we’re able to provide more of our outdoor programs to people who need a mobility aid, and it’s not just limited to [everyday] wheelchair users.”

—Mia Macy, Adapted and Inclusive Recreation Coordinator, says in an interview with Denton-Record Chronicle

Photo Credit: www.dentonrc.com



Photo Credit: www.dentonrc.com



THE FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT OF WILL COUNTY, IL

The Forest Preserve District of Will County offers an adaptive hiking program with GRIT Freedom Chairs, adaptive kayaks, and canoe launches, improving accessibility across its 22,000 acres and 125 miles of trails.

The Forest Preserve District of Will County, Illinois, oversees over 22,000 acres of land and more than 125 miles of trails. It organizes workshops, education programs, and events year-round...and offers an adaptive hiking program!

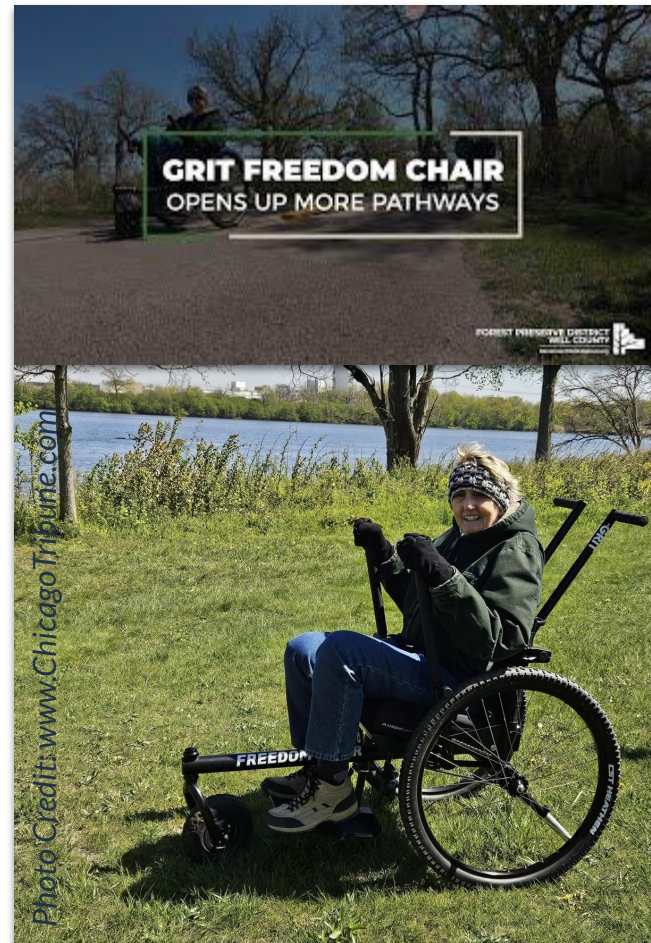
The Four Rivers Environmental Education Center represents a milestone in inclusivity as the first-ever nature center to be accredited by the National Inclusion Project. This accreditation followed extensive staff training and a rigorous accessibility review. Four Rivers met the highest standards of inclusivity and accessibility.

The Forest Preserve's adaptive hiking program includes GRIT Freedom Chairs, which allow individuals with mobility challenges to navigate natural trails that are not wheelchair accessible. Also available are adaptive kayaks and canoe launches that assist individuals with mobility issues to safely enter and exit the water.

They offer their adaptive equipment on a first-come, first-served basis and provide [reservation information online, here.](#)

“ I can't access trails with the wheelchair I have now, but in this one, I can. To be this close to the river is awesome, and I did it on my own. It's neat. It's definitely a whole new world. ”

—Kim Kosmatka, community member, in an interview with Shaw Local



Above: A promotional video created by the Forest Preserve District of Will County.
Below: A photo of Kim enjoying the ride!

»» THE BUSHNELL-SAGE LIBRARY

The Bushnell-Sage Library in Sheffield, Massachusetts, offers all-terrain GRIT Freedom Chairs for loan, purchased with a grant from the Massachusetts Office of Disability. They organized a seminar to introduce the community to the equipment.

The Bushnell-Sage Library in Sheffield, Massachusetts, provides a wealth of services and resources for its community, often for free! From books and audiobooks to DVDs and CDs, to an enormous array of events, Bushnell-Sage strives to answer the question, “Do you have...” with “Yes, we do!”

Located in Western Massachusetts, surrounded by mountains and state parks, Sheffield boasts hundreds of miles of trails and acres of parkland. In 2023, the library secured a grant from the Massachusetts Office of Disability to purchase all-terrain wheelchairs, now available for loan directly from the library.

The library staff certainly don’t consider themselves experts in accessibility or adaptive equipment—but, they still wanted to offer the kind of equipment that would help community members enjoy Sheffield’s outdoor spaces. They opted for GRIT Freedom Chairs for their straightforward operation and easy storage.

Once the chairs arrived, the Sheffield Library organized an informative seminar, during which interested community members could see the all-terrain wheelchairs in person and test them out! GRIT joined the seminar via a video call to help answer questions and guide a few test rides!

“I’m really almost without words to express our appreciation on being able to move this forward and help children who will benefit from the GRIT Junior. There was a young boy and his parents at our virtual demo. I think of them every time I have thought of this grant.”

—Rene, of the Bushnell-Sage Library



Photo Credit: Bushnell-Sage Library



Photo Credit: Mass.gov

REHABILITATION CENTERS

Rehabilitation centers help individuals improve their independence and mobility after an accident or procedure. They offer services like occupational therapy, physical therapy, counseling and psychological aid, assistive technology aid, and more. As part of their comprehensive approach to rehabilitation, many now incorporate outdoor adaptive equipment and adaptive hiking.

Some patients attend a rehabilitation center to relearn a specific task or skill; many, though, must relearn how to do *everything*, from eating, bathing, bathroom duties, and beyond. Learning how to use adaptive equipment to accomplish these tasks is an important part of the rehabilitation process.

Adaptive equipment like all-terrain wheelchairs can help patients regain access to the outdoors. Spending a short amount of time outside every day can provide a huge morale boost for patients during their stay; they also learn what they need to learn to safely navigate outdoor spaces when they return home. After using the equipment under the safe supervision of therapists, patients can leave rehabilitation centers knowing how to handle inclines, sloped sidewalks, curbs, varying terrains, and more.

Photo Credit: Shepherd Center



»» QLI REHABILITATION CENTER

QLI Rehabilitation Center in Omaha, Nebraska, uses all-terrain wheelchairs to help patients with neurological conditions and other disabilities practice outdoor navigation as part of their rehabilitation.

QLI Rehabilitation Center in Omaha, Nebraska, specializes in rehab for patients with neurological conditions and also welcomes those with spinal cord injuries, limb loss, and more. The QLI team's philosophy revolves around three tenants: Excellent medical care, real-world rehabilitation, and building hope.

QLI uses its fleet of adaptive hiking equipment to help its patients get familiar with the tools they may be using when they leave the facility. Getting outside, navigating outdoor terrains, and being able to safely use the necessary equipment is not only an example of real-world rehab—it can also provide a strong dose of hope for the road to come. Patients who have spent long weeks or months receiving medical care use QLI's all-terrain wheelchairs to get outside, feel the sunshine, and continue to work toward a new life outside of the center.

QLI stores its equipment on-site at its 65-acre facility and makes it available for any patient ready to put it to use! Patients receive expert advice and guidance from QLI's staff.

The QLI Rehabilitation Center even offers an adaptive functional fitness program to create individualized and class-based fitness plans for its patients. Participants can attend in-person or online.



Photo Credit: www.nicpp.unl.edu/qli

“Every person I've ever come in contact with has been friendly, helpful and has exhibited the compassion to my family and my son that separates this facility from any other place on this planet. Without QLI, I can't imagine where we'd be.”

—Looie G., father of QLI patient

»» SHEPHERD REHABILITATION CENTER

The Shepherd Center in Atlanta, Georgia, integrates all-terrain wheelchairs into daily rehabilitation for patients recovering from spinal cord and brain injuries. They will soon be opening a renovated, outdoor space for all-terrain wheelchair use.

It is for good reason that the Shepherd Center, of Atlanta, Georgia, is consistently ranked as one of the best rehabilitation hospitals in the nation. Specializing in providing care for patients with spinal cord injuries (SCI) and brain injuries, Shepherd Center offers tremendous recovery, rehab, compassion, and creativity to every one of its patients. Receiving care at the Shepherd Center is so sought after, more half half of its patients come from out of state.

Part of Shepherd Center's commitment to providing well-rounded rehabilitation is making sure its patients are confident in both outdoor and indoor spaces. For this reason, its team uses all-terrain wheelchairs with its patients every single day. From on-site outings to off-site trips to nearby parks and trails, the Shepherd Center team makes sure outdoor recreation is an option for any and all.

In fact, Shepherd Center is even building a new outdoor space specifically to allow patients to experience a variety of different terrains in a safe environment.

The Shepherd Center stores its equipment at its facility, which also features 152 beds, multiple fitness centers, a seating and mobility clinic, a facility dog program, and more.

“We work on reconnecting with a passion they already have or by finding something new to fill their cup every day. That's the greatest part of this job—helping people get back into the community and life again.”

—Gavin McClintock, Outdoor Specialist, Shepherd Center



The Soque River Slam Returns

After a successful inaugural year in 2023, anglers can return to the river with Shepherd Center this fall.

Grab your gear and get ready for this year's Soque River Slam, an invitational fishing rodeo benefiting Shepherd Center. The event will be held on Saturday, October 26, 2024, in Clarksville, Georgia.

Ten teams of anglers, each with seven members, including one patient from Shepherd, will enjoy a day of fishing on the beautiful Soque River. Teams can look forward to lunch on the water, cash prizes, and bragging rights for the teams with the largest number of fish "clearly on the hook" and the largest brown trout.

In the afternoon, participants can enjoy live music, camaraderie, and award presentations.

For more information or to register a team, contact Lisa Ruger at lisa.ruger@shepherd.org or scan the QR code below.



Save the Date

Upcoming Events

RPM 9/11 5K
Saturday, September 7, 2024
Chastain Park
American Legion Post 140

40th Annual
Shepherd Center Cup
Monday, September 23, 2024
Cherokee Country Club

Conlan Cup
Monday, September 30, 2024
The Golf Club of Georgia

Shepherd Center
Junior Committee's Second
Annual Cornhole Tournament
Saturday, October 26, 2024
Steady Hand Beer Co.

Soque Slam Invitational
Fishing Rodeo
Saturday, October 26, 2024

The Shepherd Center publishes the Spinal Column, which features patient profiles, medical and treatment news, upcoming events, research features, volunteer and donor recognition and more. [Click here to subscribe.](#)

OTHER

Even if your organization doesn't fit neatly into one of the previous categories, your goal to help people access outdoor spaces and stay active means there's a place for adaptive hiking within your organization!

Other kinds of organizations that are already offering adaptive hiking programs—or offering adaptive equipment to their staff and program participants—include:

- Gyms, weight rooms, and fitness centers
- Gardens and arboretums
- Bike parts and pump tracks
- Historical societies
- Campgrounds
- Veteran-specific organizations
- Ski resorts
- Tourism and travel companies
- Religious centers and places of worship
- And more!

“I'm proud of KOA's dedication to outdoor accessibility and inclusivity. This initiative reflects our commitment to innovation, customer value, and fostering a family-oriented atmosphere [...] This demonstrates that KOA is living its mission of connecting people to the outdoors and each other.”

—Randy Howell, [Campgrounds of America \(KOA\)](#)

Photo Credit: KOA



THE SOAR PROGRAM AT NORTHEAST OFF-ROAD ADVENTURES

NORA's SOAR Program offers adaptive hiking, 4X4 driving experiences, and adaptive camping on its 75 acres. They use a fleet of all-terrain wheelchairs to provide outdoor opportunities for both small and large groups.

What do you get with 75 acres of forested land, offroad 4X4 vehicles, professional drivers, an airgun range, and endless mud, rocks, and turns? An amazing opportunity for an adaptive hiking program!

The team at NORA began operating their off-road driving school in Ellenville, NY, in 2011. Since then, they've offered individual, small group, and corporate-sized 4WD driving tours, during which attendees can ride along or drive off-road vehicles over some seriously extreme terrains.

In 2019, Scott Trager and his team started the Specialized Outdoor Adaptive Recreation (SOAR) program. Since 2019, SOAR has provided frequent opportunities for adaptive hiking, off-road experiences in their 4X4 vehicles, overnight adaptive camping trips, air gun marksmanship, and more. They employ a fleet of all-terrain wheelchairs, ranging from manual to electric.

To learn about adaptive programming and the needs of the adaptive community, SOAR has built relationships with Helen Hayes Rehabilitation Hospital, Burke Rehabilitation Hospital, and others.

“SOAR has AMAZING outdoor activities basically any level of injury can do. MUST VISIT! I'm an incomplete C6 and drove off road in a Jeep and enjoyed the wheelchair course in both the GRIT Freedom Chair and the Action Trackchair. Went with my quad rugby team and we all had a blast.”

—Chris D., SOAR participant



Above/Below: SOAR participants pose for a photo opportunity and convene as a group before riding the trails.

»» BERNHEIM FOREST & ARBORETUM

Bernheim Forest and Arboretum offers free reservations of their all-terrain wheelchairs backed with trained staff and volunteers, and detailed accessibility information. The popular "Forest Giants" sculptures by artist Thomas Dambo are a major attraction.

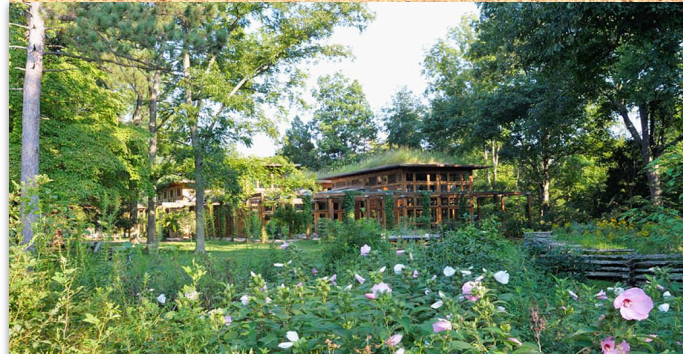
Bernheim Forest and Arboretum has created [this fantastic landing page](#) on its website, complete with trail accessibility information, GRIT FAQs and tutorials, a reservation request form, and more! Its adaptive equipment program is supported by the [WHAS Crusade for Children](#) and comes at no cost to its users.

The all-terrain mobility equipment is stored on-site at Bernheim, available by advanced reservation. Participant signups and scheduling are managed through a reservation system, ensuring the chairs are available when needed. Reservations can be made for on-site use between 10AM-4PM.

Bernheim staff and volunteers receive specific training on the use and maintenance of the GRIT Freedom Chairs so they can effectively assist visitors.

Bernheim Forest and Arboretum features the "Forest Giants" sculptures by Danish artist Thomas Dambo. These 15-20-foot tall, whimsical sculptures are made from reclaimed wood and have become a major attraction to the property.

Photo Credit: www.bernheim.org



Visitors at Bernheim can explore these magical and impressive giants along the Forest Giants Trail!



CHAPTER 5

OPERATIONS & LOGISTICS

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Now that you've had the chance to learn about some other successful, adaptive hiking programs, let's get yours rolling! In this section, we'll talk about key logistical and operational components of adaptive hiking programs.

While no two adaptive hiking programs will be completely identical, the cornerstones to your program will likely be similar. These include:

Marketing

You'll of course want to let the community know about your program! Four core ways to spread the word are **Social Media** , **Email Newsletter** , **Website** , and **Events** . We'll share examples and talk about how to best leverage these marketing methods.

Liability

Keep your participants, your team, and your equipment safe and protected by creating a strong liability waiver.

Scheduling & Signups

Make it easy for members of the community to reserve your adaptive equipment and/or sign up for your events.

Equipment Transportation

You may have the need or desire to transport your adaptive equipment. Make sure you select equipment that will allow you to do this.

Equipment Storage

Make sure you plan to store your equipment somewhere safe when not in use.

Training

It will be crucial to train your team, your volunteers, and the general public on the adaptive equipment you'll be employing.

Maintenance

In this section, we'll discuss the maintenance you should do before and after each hike. We'll also talk about annual or semi-annual maintenance that can help your equipment live a long and adventurous life in your program.



Right: A group of hikers prepares to ride toward the trailhead at an annual No Barriers event, [What's Your Everest](#).

MARKETING

Whether you're offering all-terrain wheelchairs at your visitor's center or organizing a monthly adaptive hike, it's important to promote your program! Let's dive into some common ways to get started and review some real examples.

Social Media

Snap a photo and add a caption to get people's attention! If you're just getting started, you can showcase your equipment, a group shot, or images of your team preparing to launch the hiking program. Once you've got folks participating in your events, be sure to take photos to use in future promotions. Want to get more attention? Interact with the posts from like-minded organizations and start a conversation.

Email Newsletter

These can be a powerful marketing tool, as they are a direct line into the inbox of your audience. And, unlike social media, you have a lot more space to work with and can more easily include clickable links.

Website

Consider creating a dedicated webpage for your adaptive hiking offerings. Use the space on your website to provide detailed information on equipment, participation, and on-site trails. Provide objective trail details to help individuals choose suitable options. Include backlinks to other relevant sites and to other pages within your organization's own website.

In-Person

Don't forget about real life opportunities! You could visit your local rehabilitation hospital to share information about your all-terrain wheelchair rental program. Or you could host a table at a disability expo, fair, or an outdoor retailer.

A Little Bit Goes a Long Way!

Even small efforts can build momentum over time. Think of marketing as one aspect of how you are building a relationship with your community. If you're comfortable on one platform and it works for you, stick with it and don't worry about the rest.

Check out these event listings and registration links from [Disabled Hikers](#).

Disabled Hikers Group Hike: Miller Peninsula State Park

Feb 16, 2025, 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM PST
Miller Peninsula State Park, Diamond Point
Rd, Sequim, WA 98382, USA

Join us for an accessible outing at Miller
Peninsula State Park near Sequim, WA

Share

Register



Making the Outdoors Accessible for All

Apr 02, 2025, 12:00 PM – 1:15 PM PDT
Webinar

Join Syren Nagakyrie and Elizabeth Ralston
in conversation about how allies can help
create a more accessible outdoors. This is a
paid ticket event.

Share

f y in

Register



**Making the Outdoors
Accessible for All**

Social Media Marketing

To market new programs, this is a great place to start. Social media posts are typically short, sweet, and don't require the depth of content required for a newsletter. Here are some of the key elements:

Images & Videos

Social media is all about capturing attention with a high-quality content. You can use photos, graphics, or videos to make your post noticeable. Want to flex your graphic design muscles? **Canva** is a great tool with free templates you can use.

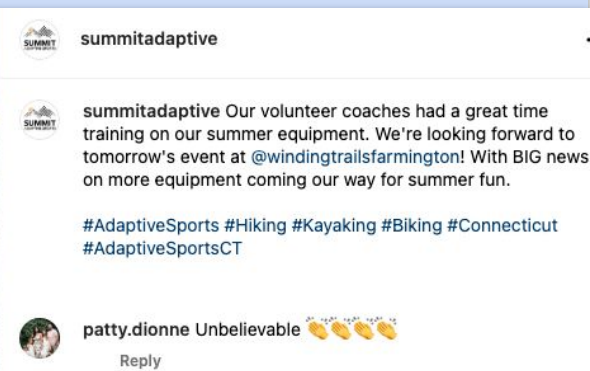
Tags

Including tags helps amplify your message and also establish additional credibility. It makes it easier for other organizations to cross-promote your event to their audience. Be reasonable, though, and avoid tagging 45 organizations in every post.

Engage


Comments on your post can be a great way to engage with your community, answer questions, and generate more interest. You could also create a post with a poll or question. This helps you learn about your audience, and draws folks who might otherwise not comment.

Summit Adaptive Sports, of Connecticut, regularly updates their social media pages with information about their current and upcoming events. [Check them out on Instagram, here!](#)



Email Newsletter Marketing

You can also send an email blast that specifically focuses on an upcoming event or opportunity, or you can weave the information in with other news from your organization. Email newsletters are a perfect opportunity to send traffic to specific landing pages on your website. Here are a few examples of how organizations use their email newsletter to promote their adaptive hiking offerings:




ACTIVE PROJECT newsletter

The Active Project Newsletter provides adaptive recreation news, opportunities, and upcoming local events straight to your inbox monthly.

News

Apply for an Adaptive Sports Equipment Grant




The Active Fund
Grants for Adaptive Sports Equipment
July 1 - September 30

Looking to purchase your very own adaptive sports equipment? Get help funding your equipment with the Kelly Brush Foundation's **Active Fund** grant! Applications are now being accepted for the Kelly Brush Foundation's 6th Active Fund cycle until September 30 at 5 pm EDT.

Anyone living in the US with paralysis from a traumatic spinal cord injury can qualify. The KBF has been giving grants for over a decade now and has provided over 1,800 pieces of equipment to people with SCIs in 50 states.

[Learn More & Apply](#)

Get Active on August 1 for #HaveADay




#HAVEADAY
AUGUST 1ST 2021
INTERNATIONAL ADAPTIVE ACTIVITY DAY

Get ready for HaveADay on August 1! Celebrate HaveADay, International Adaptive Activity Day, by enjoying your favorite sport or engaging in a fun recreational activity. Make sure to snap a picture of your day and use the hashtag #HaveADay to encourage others in this community to get out and explore.

Live in New England? Come hang with Team KBF, High Fives Foundation, Victoria's Victory Foundation, and Vermont Adaptive Ski & Sports at Killington. Vermont on August 11 will be mountain biking all day at the bike park and would love to have our community join us statewide. If you're interested in riding with us, please reach out to Greg at greg@kellybrushfoundation.org.

[Learn More About #HaveADay](#)

Join Team KBF & Cycle to Support Adaptive Sports for All



kelly brush RIDE

Make more active lifestyles possible for people with SCI by cycling in the Kelly Brush Ride on Saturday, September 7 in [Middlebury, Vermont](#), or on Sunday, October 10 in [Mill Valley, California](#), or [anywhere](#) between 9/7 and 10/10 nationwide! This money fun-raised for the Kelly Brush Ride helps other people with paralysis purchase the probably expensive adaptive sports equipment and helps the KBF build resources like the Active Project.

Handcycles ride for free! Sign up today and join **Team KBF** to support adaptive sports across the United States.

Source: [Kelly Brush Foundation](#)

Berthoud Pass- New Year, New Missions!

The return after our debut at Berthoud Pass in December. The plan is to hike, grill out and chill out!

Berthoud Pass
Jan 11th
Volunteer Need: High [RSVP](#)
Athlete seats: 2/2 Full

Please fill out a yearly waiver if you have not already. There is no need to fill out more than 1 per calendar year.
<https://waiver.smartwaiver.com/w/610d5420d724f/web/>

You are all appreciated! Please continue to support us in any way you can. Reach out to jeffrey@thelockwoodfoundation.org if you have any questions.

~Jeffrey

Upcoming Events & Hikes

Berthoud Pass
Jan 11th
Volunteer Need: High [RSVP](#)
Athlete seats: 2/2 Full

Berthoud Pass
Jan 25th
Volunteer Need: High [RSVP](#)
Athlete seats: 1/2 Email if Interested

Source: [The Lockwood Foundation](#)



How are you Celebrating Trails Day?

Trails provide accessibility to explore the outdoors on foot, bike, and wheelchair. American Trails is interested in knowing how your organization or group is commemorating trails this year. Have a unique event or celebration planned for your community, or an interesting article to share? Submit articles or links to American Trails by April 1 to trailhead@americantails.org.

Engineered Excellence

- 100 Year Design Life
- Won't Rust, Rot, or Corrode
- Inert and Non-leaching
- Environmentally safe

Lightweight Sustainable Resilient Trail Bridges and Boardwalks

WAGNERS

817-470-7821
www.wagnerscft.com

Resources...

The [American Trails Resource Library](#) is a central hub of resource links, documents, tools, and best practices that are essential for the development of services and capabilities needed to improve effective information sharing within the trails community. Search for resources by category or by using keywords.



Webinar: Adaptive Trail Mobility Equipment and Programming 101
Want to learn more about adaptive trail equipment and adaptive recreation programming? This American Trails Advancing Trails Webinar will discuss both, as well as funding resources that can help facilitate equipment purchases and programming. [Register for this webinar >](#)

Apr 11




Webinar: Building Adaptive Trail Programming: Lessons from the Field
This American Trails Advancing Trails Webinar will introduce best practices for implementing an **adaptive hiking** program showcasing two successful programs. [Register for this webinar >](#)

May 21




Webinar: Trail Assessment for Accessibility and Sustainability
This American Trails Advancing Trails Webinar explores the process of assessing natural surface pedestrian trails for accessibility and sustainability and will focus on developing new trails as well as conversion of existing trails. [Download the PowerPoint presentation >](#) and [Find out more >](#)

Source: [American Trails](#)



Move Beyond Newsletter

Welcome to the **Move Beyond Newsletter** from GRIT:
Your one-stop shop for all things adaptive adventure.




Rider Spotlight

Trevor M.


GRIT recently had the chance to sit down with Trevor to learn more about what led him to GRIT, to understand more about how he uses his Freedom Chair, and—most importantly—to put a spotlight on this hardworking, fun-loving, joy-spreading powerhouse we are lucky to know! Read on to learn more.

[Read the Interview](#)



Partner Spotlight

Ride Onward with Waypoint
Adaptive kayaking, canoeing, tandem cycling, and more! Check out the open enrollment for summer activities with Waypoint Adventure. Don't forget Waypoint's [new spot in NC](#), either!




GRIT in the News

Adventure Continues in TN
What happens when a US national park, [Kamgrounds of America](#), [Catalyst Sports](#), [Knox County](#), and GRIT Freedom Chair get together? Click the below button to find out!

[Find an Event Today](#)

[Learn More Here](#)



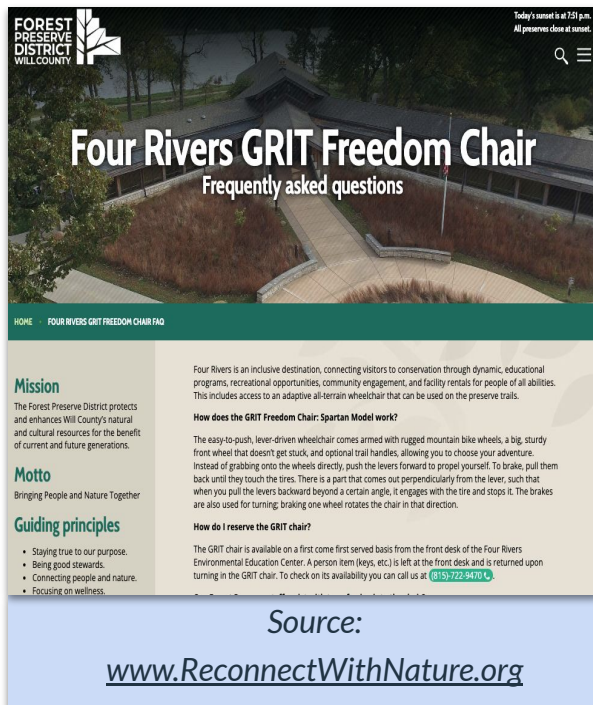
Quote of the Week

"The GRIT chair is a big hit in Venice! I keep getting stopped!"

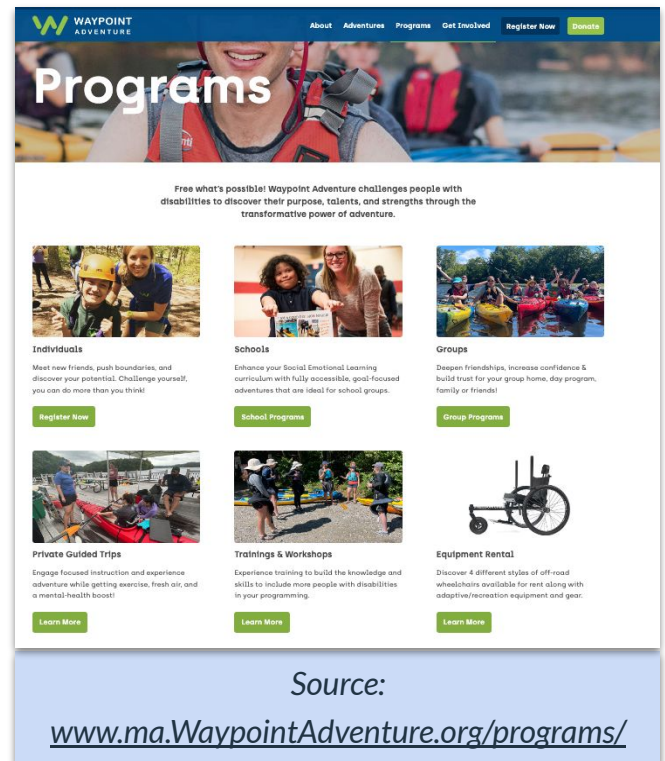
Source: [GRIT Freedom Chair](#)

Website Marketing

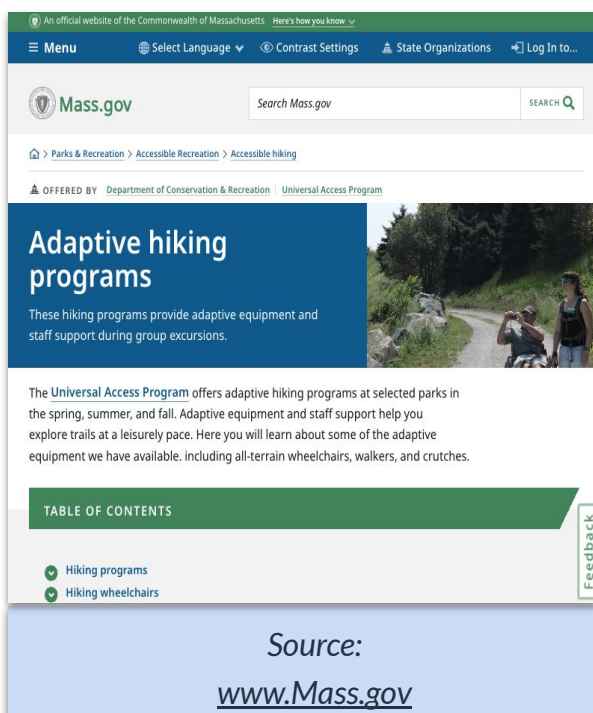
Your website is a great place to market your adaptive hiking opportunities. And it's often where you'll want to direct people from your social media posts and newsletter articles. Use the links below to click through and explore some examples:



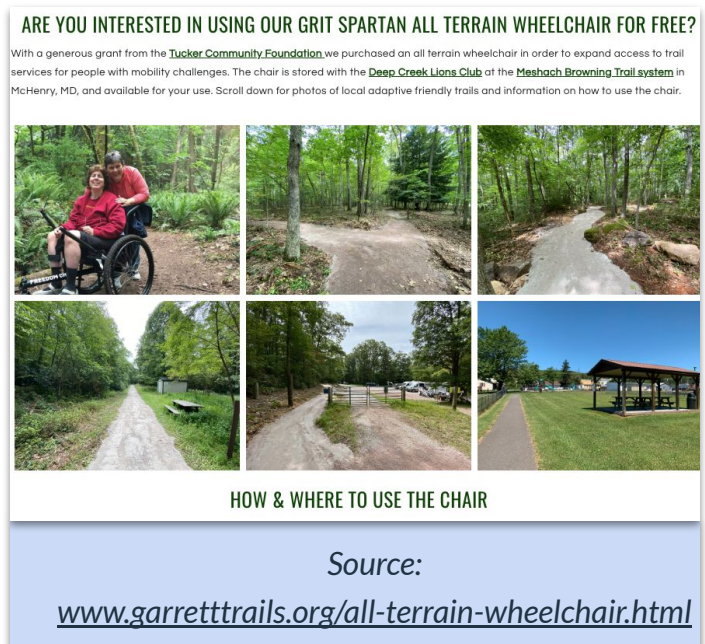
Source:
www.ReconnectWithNature.org



Source:
www.ma.WaypointAdventure.org/programs/



Source:
www.Mass.gov



Source:
www.garretttrails.org/all-terrain-wheelchair.html

Event Marketing

While we tend to focus our efforts on the planning side of events, promotion is just as important. And because we're all bombarded with so much information online, you may want to share your invite across multiple channels, and/or promote it a few times in the lead-up.

Whether crafting a post on social media, an online ad, or a printout/poster, try to include as much of the below information as possible. On this page and the one that follows, see some examples of fantastic adaptive hiking marketing.

What to Include on Promotion Materials:

- Who/What/When/Where
 - Make sure these basics are clearly communicated upfront
- What Resources Are There?
 - For example, adaptive equipment, accessible parking, accessible restrooms
- How to Sign Up?
 - Is there an advanced registration or can folks just show up day-of?
- Contact Info
 - Include an email and/or phone number in case people have questions
- Image
 - A photo or a graphic will help capture people's attention
- Tags
 - Tagging partners and others in the community makes it easier for them to cross-promote your event

DCR Universal Access Program
July 10 at 7:41 AM · 🌳

🐼 To celebrate and create equitable access to the outdoors, 🌳 a group in Malden is hosting a FREE Disabilities Pride Day Adaptive Hiking Adventure at Greenwood Park in Middlesex Falls on July 26th from 9-11 a.m. 🦽🦽🦽

👉 Jeff Adams and [Waypoint Adventure](#) will be leading a small group hike/flora and fauna guided tour. 🌞 The hike will be between 1.5-2 miles around a wooded path. 🌲 The terrain is mild-moderate (with some roots and rocks). Off-road wheelchairs, parking and an accessible porta-potty will be available!

★ Pre-registration is required and preference is given to Malden residents!! Visit <https://www.thegreatmaldenoutdoors.com/events> for more information and to register.

📞 Questions? Contact eturpin@waypointadventure.org

DISABILITIES PRIDE DAY

ADAPTIVE HIKE EVENT

Greenwood Park, Stoneham
JULY 26TH 9AM TO 11AM

To celebrate & create equitable access to the outdoors, we've created a FREE adaptive hiking event with a flora and fauna guided tour, use of off-road wheelchairs, and prizes for Malden residents.

REGISTER AS A VOLUNTEER OR PARTICIPANT AT
www.TheGreatMaldenOutdoors.com/Events

Above is a promotional Facebook post from the DCR Universal Access Program.

kbfb ACTIVE PROJECT
Sports Orgs & Events Community Links & Resources Sign In Sign Up

Adaptive Hiking

Join us for Hiking, location to be determined, from 9:30 am to 11:30 am (subject to change) for individuals with disabilities. Explore the great outdoors and enjoy the beauty of nature in a supportive and inclusive setting. Don't miss this chance to connect with nature and fellow hikers!

Register

The Kelly Brush Foundation (KBF) posts upcoming events on their online portal, called the Active Project.

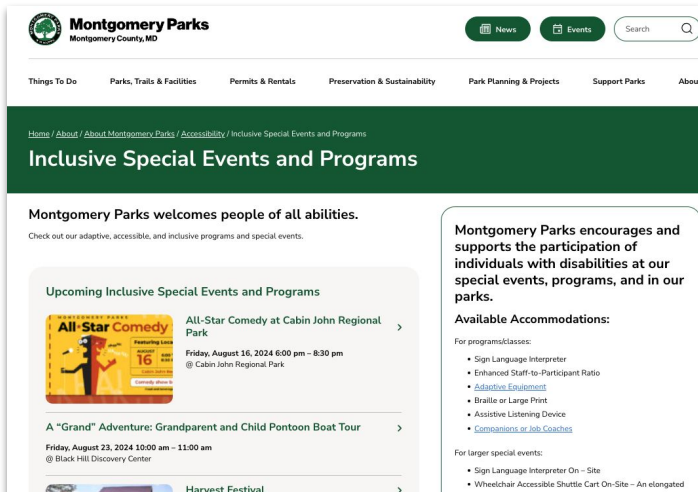
Event Marketing (Cont.)



The Desert Recreation District, of California, shares important information about their adaptive hikes online.



Helen Hayes Hospital advertising an upcoming adaptive hiking event online.



Montgomery Parks, of Maryland, posts their inclusive events and programs on their website, [here](#).



Legacy Parks Foundation provides the who, what, where, and why of their events on [their website, here](#).

LIABILITY

The following information is for informational purposes only and should not be considered legal advice. For advice specific to your situation, please consult with a licensed and qualified attorney.

Liability waivers are essential to an adaptive hiking program or adaptive equipment rental program. Liability waivers protect your organization from legal claims and inform participants about risks associated with adaptive equipment. This reduces accidents and improves safety.

What should you include in a liability waiver?

Every liability form should, at minimum, include the following:

- **Assumption of Risk:** The participant acknowledges the risks associated with using adaptive equipment at your facility.
- **Description of the Equipment:** The participant understands the specific type of equipment they will be using.
- **Release of Liability:** The participant releases the organization from claims or liabilities resulting from the use of the equipment.
- **Indemnification:** The participant agrees to protect the organization from claims.
- **Proper Use Acknowledgment:** The participant confirms having received and understood all safety instructions.
- **Consent and Signature:** The participant agrees to the terms and then signs and dates the waiver. A parent or guardian should always sign on behalf of a minor.

Getting Started

We recommend reviewing the examples in this chapter and consulting legal counsel to make sure your organization is fully covered.

Below are examples of liability waivers used by organizations offering adaptive mobility equipment. For each one we have also provided a link to their website so you can see how the waiver is presented. For example, some require the waiver to be signed as part of the equipment reservation, while others are available on-site to sign when the participant arrives.



Equipment Rental/Release Form

The National Ability Center offers adaptive rental equipment including, but not limited to: outriggers, tip clamps, ski bikes, recumbent cycles, hand cycles, tricycles, tandem cycles, side-by-side cycles, mountain bikes, canoes, kayaks, stand up paddle boards, water ski/wakeboards, sled hockey sleds, Nordic sit skis, stand up Nordic equipment.

1. All equipment rentals must be approved by the Equipment and Rental Manager or Program Manager
2. Equipment availability may vary depending on current programming.
3. If an extensive fitting or modification of the equipment is needed, you will schedule a fit and assessment with an equipment rental included in the pricing
4. Certain pieces of equipment may require a specific set of skills in order to rent. Individuals may need to demonstrate these skills in order to rent equipment
5. All equipment rentals must be scheduled with the Equipment and Rental Coordinator 48 hours in advance
6. Renter must do the following:
 - a. Sign a Rental Agreement and Release form
 - b. Sign a National Ability Center Liability Waiver
 - c. Pay the associated rental fee

Renter will be responsible for any damages to the equipment

7. Equipment must be returned by 1pm or 5pm for half day rentals
8. Full day rentals may be picked up the day before the rental between 2 and 5pm and returned the day after the rental before noon.
9. Participant must be able to use equipment independently and demonstrate the needed skills to operate.
10. NAC is not liable while you are using equipment independently.

To Be Filled Out By Renter:

Name: _____ Date: _____

Phone: _____

Emergency Contact: _____ Phone Number: _____

I accept full responsibility for any damages other than routine wear and tear, or loss of National Ability Center property, while release to me for personal usage. I agree to fully reimburse the National Ability Center for these damages or loss should they occur while in my possession. I agree to follow all the equipment rental rules as outline above.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

To Be Filled Out By NAC Staff:

The National Ability Center (NAC) uses the above equipment rental form. Bonus: They use this same form to ask permission to use photos of their participants.

LIABILITY (Cont.)

**LIABILITY RELEASE AGREEMENT
ALL-TERRAIN WHEELCHAIR**

I, _____, in consideration of use of this access service at _____, a unit of the Texas State Park system, assume all risks, whether foreseen or unforeseen, associated with the use of the all-terrain wheelchair being provided by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). I unconditionally agree to release, indemnify, and hold harmless the State of Texas, TPWD and its commissioners and employees, from any and all liabilities, costs, expenses, claims and damages for which they, individually or collectively, might otherwise become liable by reason of any accidents, or injuries to, or death of any persons, or damage to any property, connected with or related to the presence of any such person or property, regardless of how, where or when such injury, death or damage occurs, even if caused by the negligence of TPWD.

I understand that the activity involves risk. I agree that I will follow the safety and other rules and instructions of TPWD at all times while participating in this activity.

I have read this document and understand all its terms. I execute the document voluntarily with full knowledge of its significance.

Printed Name _____ Date _____

Signature _____ Phone Number _____

Signature of Parent or Guardian _____
(If the participant is under 18 years of age)

Emergency Contact Name _____ Phone Number _____

Employee Information

Reservation Notes _____

Car Make/Model/Color _____

Return Condition of Equipment _____


Check-Out - Staff Initials & Time _____ Check-In - Staff Initials & Time _____

Reservation Date (MM/DD/YYYY)	User - Youth (Y) or Adult (A)	# of Youth (under 18)	# of Adult(s)	Group Total

Above is the liability form used by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). TPWD keeps it simple and collects the necessary information.

- I understand and agree to the following user guidelines:
 - Only one person is allowed on the ATC at any time.
 - Seat belt is required at all times.
 - Controls must be in the off position before sitting in the ATC and before getting out of the chair.
 - ATC must be unoccupied during loading and unloading from vehicle or carrier.
 - Stair climbing or steep inclines that could cause the ATC to tip over are not permitted.
 - The ATC and its user must be accompanied by a companion in good physical condition for navigating Office of State Parks' (OSP) property at all times.
 - Neglectful use is defined as using the ATC outside of designated areas or disobeying any other written and designated rules of OSP displayed in and around OSP property or provided in this document, other required forms, in the in-person training, or displayed on the ATC.
 - ATC must be used safely and responsibly at all times.
 - The in-person training program must be completed before use of the ATC.
 - Use of the ATC is purely recreational. Use of the ATC for commercial purposes is prohibited.
- My companion's signature below indicates that they understand that this entire document pertains to them as well and they have read and agreed to all the conditions and limitations therein. In case of emergency, it is my companion's responsibility to have a charged mobile device available at all times. In the event that no cellular service is available, my companion will be required to seek help by returning to the location where training took place as quickly as possible. My companion and I have both attended the in-person training program and read the "OSP All-terrain Chair Usage Requirements" and our signatures on this waiver certify our understanding of all topics covered.
- I understand that it is the responsibility of the participant and/or companion to move and maneuver the ATC around the park and to return it in working condition. OSP staff may not under any circumstance assist with transfers to or from the chair unless for the purpose of emergency retrieval. Any necessary assistance adjusting the chair or assisting with transfers, including providing transfer board or other assistive equipment, is the responsibility of my companion.
- I understand that the ATC is only permitted on certain trails and portions of trails as designated and agree to remain within these allowed areas. I have received a map of these areas. I will be financially responsible for any and all damages to the ATC arising from negligence or the violation of any terms in this document.
- I hereby waive, discharge, and release, for myself, my heirs, executors and administrators, beneficiaries,

Click here to see the complete adaptive equipment liability form used by Louisiana State Parks. The form includes rules of use, a media agreement, and more, each separated into its own section.

 **PARTICIPANT RELEASE, WAIVER OF LIABILITY,
AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT**
Town of Sheffield
Bushnell-Sage Library, Sheffield, MA
(Please Print)

Participant's Name: _____

Participant's Date of Birth: ____/____/____

If under 18 years of age or have a legal guardian, Name of Participant's Legal Guardian: _____

Home Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: Cell: _____ Home: _____ Work: _____

In consideration of being permitted to participate in the Bushnell-Sage Library's Library of Things program by checking-out (borrowing) the Library's Grit Freedom All-Terrain wheelchair or the Grit Junior wheelchair, (hereinafter "Program"), I, the undersigned, on behalf of the participant listed above (hereinafter "Participant"), and for myself, my heirs, personal and/or legal representatives, next of kin, and assigns (hereinafter collectively referred to as "I" or "ME") CONSENT to the Participant's participation in the Program and hereby:

1. RELEASE, WAIVE, DISCHARGE AND COVENANT NOT TO SUE the Town of Sheffield, the Bushnell-Sage Library, its agents, servants, employees, officials, volunteers, contractors, representatives (hereinafter the "Town") from any and all liability, claims, demands, actions, suits, loss and causes of action whatsoever arising out of or related to any loss, damage, or injury, including, but not limited to, death, illness, injury and/or disease, and any

Above is the form Bushnell-Sage Library of Sheffield, MA asks its participants to sign before renting out equipment.

Rider's Signature: _____ Date: _____
(Parent/Legal Guardian Signature if Rider is a under 18 years of age)

LICKING PARK DISTRICT USE ONLY:

Equipment No. Issued: _____ Issued By: _____

Rental begins on: ____/____/____ Start Time: _____ am / pm

Rental ends on: ____/____/____ End Time: _____ am / pm

Date of Return: ____/____/____ Time of Return: _____ am / pm

	Yes	No	
Equipment returned?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Comments: _____
Returned on time?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____
Equipment inspected?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____
Equipment damaged?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____
Staff Initials: _____			Date: ____/____/____

A great idea: The staff of the Licking Park District in Ohio also uses their liability form as an equipment-inspection form. Click here to see the full liability form.

SCHEDULING & SIGNUPS

An adaptive hiking program needs an easy signup process! This section covers how to simplify registration, answer questions, and handle fees. A good signup page should be user-friendly and provide all necessary information for your team and participants.

Ask the Right Questions

In addition to collecting each participant's full name, email, and phone number, also consider asking these questions:

- Will you be bringing your own equipment?
- Do you use any harnesses, straps, grip strength, or positioning assistance when using other adaptive equipment?
- Are there any medications or medical concerns our team should know about?

Create a Form for Your Website

Online signup forms are wonderful because they're easy to make, easy for your audience to use, easy to update over time, and easy to automate. Create a form with software like **Google Forms**, **Zoho**, or **SurveyMonkey** and embed it onto your website. Many of these also offer a calendar feature that will allow participants to reserve equipment for their desired window without any overlap.

Automate!

Use the settings in your form-generation program to organize responses in a spreadsheet, saving time on manual data entry. Turn on notifications for submissions. Use the confirmation email that goes to registrants to share helpful info about your program, equipment, team, or events.

Participants on an adaptive hike with the organization No Barriers in Colorado take a rest to enjoy the well-earned view.



SCHEDULING & SIGNUPS (Cont.)

Check out these signup pages used by the adaptive hiking programs tagged in the captions. Refer to these forms for inspiration as you create your own signup form.

A screenshot of a Google Form titled "First & Last Name *". The form has several text input fields with labels: "Your answer", "Phone Number *", "Your answer", "Email *", "Your answer", "Emergency Contact Person & Phone Number *", "Your answer", "Where will you be using the wheelchair? *", "Your answer", and "I Agree to the Terms & Conditions *", "Your answer".

Above: Vernon Township Recreation currently uses a Google Form to collect and communicate information from/to its participants.

A screenshot of a form titled "Accessible Equipment Rentals". It includes sections for "Hippocampe Wheelchair" and "Grit Freedom Chair 3.0", each with descriptive text. At the bottom, it provides contact information for rental inquiries: "For rental information, contact Cody Ogren at codyogren@biparks.org."

Above: Keep it simple! Bainbridge Island Metro Park & Recreation District provides an email address interested parties can contact to reserve equipment.

A screenshot of a form with two main sections. The first section asks: "(Optional) One of our funders supports organizations that serve individuals with spinal cord injuries and they want to know the number of participants in our events that have spinal cord injuries. Do you have a spinal cord injury?" followed by a text input field. The second section asks: "How did you hear about this event? Who will help you transfer to the TerrainHopper?" followed by a larger text input field.

Above: The Trail Access Project prepares its participants for the program by asking equipment-specific questions.

A screenshot of a form titled "Mobility *". It contains a list of checkboxes for mobility equipment: "AFO / Leg Braces", "Crutches / Walker / Cane", "Manual Wheelchair - Full Time", "Manual Wheelchair - Part Time", "Power Wheelchair - Full Time", "Power Wheelchair - Part Time", "Prosthetics", "Scooter", "None/Ambulatory", and "Other". Below this is a section "Other Mobility Details" with a text input field. Then, there is a "Service Animal" section with a dropdown menu and a "Service Animal Name" section with a text input field.

Left: Adaptive Adventures asks participants to create a profile before signing up for a program. This makes it easy for participants to sign up for multiple events without having to give their information every time.

EQUIPMENT TRANSPORTATION

Every organization offering adaptive equipment to the public needs a solution for transporting that equipment. Even those with trail systems in their backyard will likely need to transport their equipment on occasion, whether to demos, off-site activities, day hikes, overnight trips, and more. Consider the following:

Vehicles, Trailers, and Packing Supplies

Adaptive mobility equipment comes in myriad styles, shapes, weights, and sizes. The best way to transport each piece of equipment will vary.

Battery-powered or treaded/tracked wheelchairs, for example, commonly weigh over 200 pounds and are over 35" in width. For this kind of equipment, you will likely also need a trailer and a vehicle with sufficient towing capacity. Trailers for adaptive equipment will also need tie-downs, cordage, and hooks/carabiners/brackets to keep the equipment safe while on the road.

Many pieces of all-terrain mobility equipment, like the GRIT Freedom Chair, are designed to be disassembled or folded for easy transport. Skip the trailer and transport your organization's GRIT chair in the trunk of any vehicle.



Above A GRIT Freedom Chair disassembled and packed into the trunk of a sedan. Middle and Below: Adaptive equipment loaded onto tow-behind trailers.

EQUIPMENT TRANSPORTATION

(Cont.)

Budget & Growth

Do transportation challenges affect your budget and the growth of your program?

Most pieces of adaptive equipment can be used by only one individual at a time, so larger adaptive hiking programs often include multiple pieces of equipment. While most adaptive hiking programs start with a small fleet of products, many double or triple in size quite quickly.

The mobility equipment you select should help—not hinder—the growth of your adaptive hiking program. Consider this: You start your adaptive hiking program by securing a grant for a single, \$20K piece of adaptive mobility equipment—amazing! You host your first few events and see that there are often many attendees who want to use the equipment. Would your hiking program have a bigger impact if you could buy five more wheelchairs for the same price?

Personnel

How many people does it take to safely transport the equipment?

When building or adding equipment to an adaptive hiking program, make sure you have the personnel to transport that equipment. Since many adaptive hiking programs are run by a small handful of people, it is advantageous to select equipment that won't overburden your team—in weight, complexity, and the ability to disassemble or fold.



Above: A GRIT Freedom Chair, backpack, and additional supplies loaded into the back of a car. Below: The same type of all-terrain wheelchair stored on a truck-mounted rack.

EQUIPMENT STORAGE

Just like mountain bikes, adaptive hiking equipment is designed to endure the trials of the trails...and just like mountain bikes, they need to be protected when not in use. When selecting adaptive hiking equipment for your program, check out the next two pages of options.

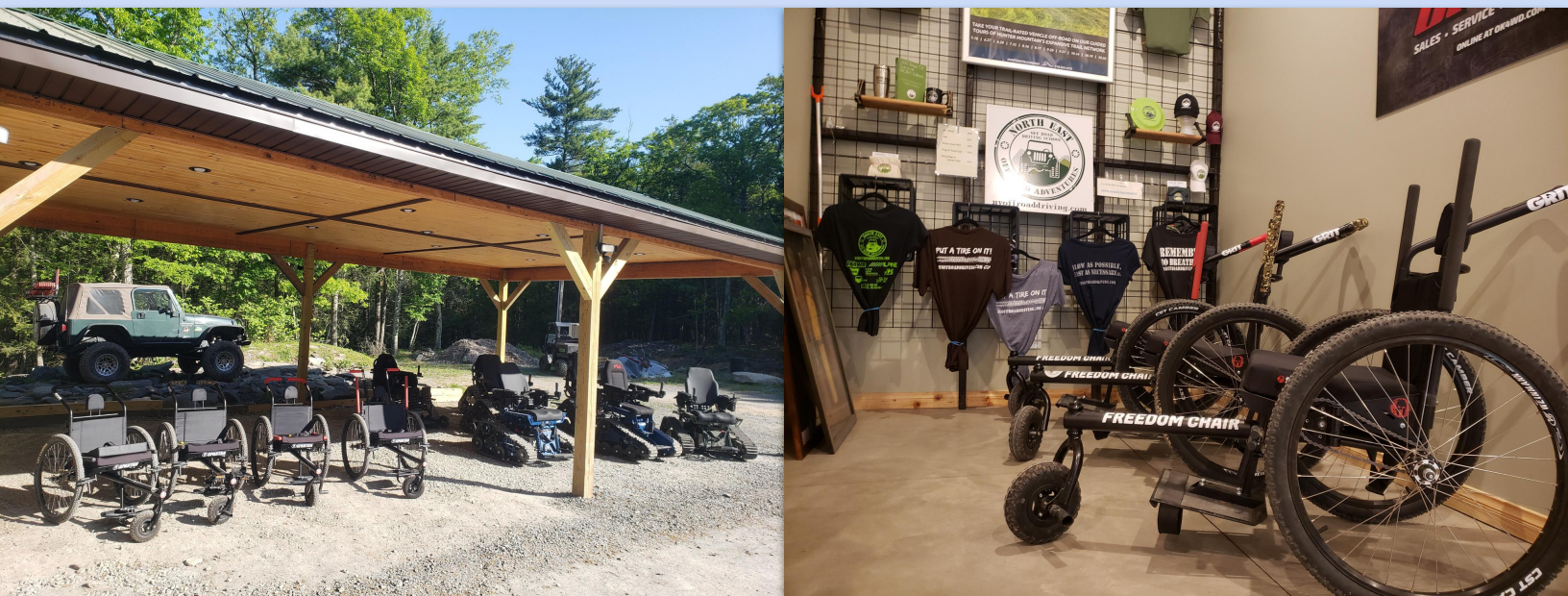
Dedicated Storage Buildings

Many organizations that provide adaptive equipment, store their adaptive equipment on-site for easy access. For example, Northeast Off-Road Adventures (NORA) in Ellenville, NY, stores their GRIT Freedom Chairs alongside their off-road 4x4 vehicles in garages and protected pavilions at their facility. This makes it easy for NORA access, demo, store, and display the equipment with ease.

Visitor Centers

Parks often store adaptive equipment in visitor centers, making it visible to all and boosting word-of-mouth promotion. To accommodate high foot traffic, choose equipment that can be folded or disassembled for easy storage and to prevent unsupervised use.

NORA, pictured below, didn't start with dedicated storage buildings. When they first began their adaptive hiking program, they stored the equipment in their front lobby. As their fleet and program expanded, they started using these purpose-built storage options.



EQUIPMENT STORAGE (Cont.)

Trailers

Adaptive equipment trailers and towing vehicles can be costly, but are great for storing equipment when not in use. Lock both the equipment and trailer securely. Before locking up, clean the equipment of mud, dirt, or salt to prevent rust or damage.

Schools

Schools using adaptive equipment must store it securely in accessible locations. Adaptive bikes, sports wheelchairs, and communication devices can be kept in gym storage rooms or specialized classrooms. For example, Boston Public Schools store adaptive PE equipment in gym storage areas for easy access.

Off-Site Buildings or Partners

If you have no available space to store your equipment, consider partnering with an organization that does! They can be the safe “home” for your equipment and, in turn, you can promote their organization, events, and drive traffic their way.

The City of Reno and the Truckee Meadows Parks Foundation have partnered to store and offer their range of equipment.

Waypoint Adventure shares a location with the Cotting School in Lexington, MA. They store their equipment on site.



TRAINING: FULL-TIME STAFF

The full-time staff who will be working in your adaptive hiking program will ideally become the experts in the room or on the trail. Most adaptive hiking programs start with a small team or even one individual who is most familiar with the equipment and the program participants. As the main point(s) of contact for the program, they should be prepared to:

- Take equipment reservations online or over the phone
- Use and maintain adaptive equipment
- Meet participants to process their reservations and make sure they are comfortable using the adaptive equipment
- Organize and lead guided hikes
- Acquire, train, and manage other part-time staff and volunteers

Knowing that these individuals tend to take on a *ton* of responsibility, equipment manufacturers like GRIT should be able to provide documentation and information on how to use and train others to use their equipment. Your full-time staff should have easy and reliable communication with the manufacturer of the equipment so they can get the answers they need to keep their program rolling.

With well-trained and enthusiastic staff, no trail is too difficult! Left: Justin Skeesuck and Patrick Gray of I'll Push You take a selfie with their hiking group. Right: Erik Weihenmayer leads a hike with No Barriers.



TRAINING: SEASONAL STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

Effectively engaging seasonal staff and volunteers can make a *good* adaptive hiking experience into an *amazing* one. When part-time staff and volunteers are empowered, informed, and excited to help, they will lessen the burden on your full-time staff and—most importantly—create a better experience for the participants. While every adaptive hiking program is unique, here are some ways part-time staff can help:

- Take reservations and answer community questions
- Assist participants before, during, and after hikes, offering help on obstacles as needed
- Bring enthusiasm, ensuring participants have a great time and are engaging in meaningful conversations
- Capture photos/videos (with permission) to promote the program
- Create and share social media content about the hike and the program
- Spread the word! Encourage volunteers to bring others and return for future events, building a reliable volunteer base.

Once they are trained to do so, volunteers can help get participants fitted in their equipment. During the hike, have them assist riders who want an extra push/pull! Photo Credit: Challenged Athletes Foundation (left), No Barriers USA (right)



TRAINING: PARTICIPANTS

It is of course important to make sure participants of your adaptive hiking program know how to safely and confidently operate the equipment. To this end, adaptive hiking programs train their participants by checking the following boxes.

Equipment Selection

Help participants choose suitable equipment by explaining the pros and cons of each and letting them decide what equipment they prefer to use. If a participant wants to use their own equipment, make sure it will “play nicely” with the equipment other participants will be using (i.e., consider placing participants with faster, e-assisted devices at the front of the line to avoid a bottleneck).

Pre-Hike Check

Inspect equipment with participants to ensure it brakes, propels, and maneuvers correctly. Explain to each participant what it is you are inspecting so they can troubleshoot on the trail if needed.

Fitting and Comfort

Provide necessary straps or accessories for each participant and have them do a demo in a flat, open area. After being fitted, participants who can get around themselves or with an assistant can continue to demo while others get fitted.

Waivers

Ensure all participants sign liability waivers.

Trail Navigation

Explain trail options and difficulty, providing maps or guides for orientation.

Assistance on the Trail

Show participants how to get help if needed, ensuring unsupervised participants have reliable communication devices.

Participants of the SOAR Program at NORA must prove their control of their all-terrain wheelchairs on a flat, gravel parking lot before they can head into the trails.



MAINTENANCE

Taking good care of adaptive mobility equipment is essential, especially if you're borrowing your equipment from another organization. Regular maintenance ensures the equipment is ready for repeated use across various terrains—it'll save you time and stress in the long run if your equipment is always ready to go!

Not sure where to start? Contact the manufacturer of the adaptive equipment in your fleet. Each piece of equipment will come with its own specific checklist. Because of this, your maintenance schedule will vary for each piece of equipment, but it typically includes some version of the following:

- **Before Each Use (Day of Use)**
 - Confirm that no hardware or chains are loose
 - Confirm cushions, seatbacks, and handles are clean
 - Confirm function of braking, accelerating, and steering mechanism
 - Confirm tire pressure and battery life, if applicable
- **After Each Use (Day of Use)**
 - Inspect the equipment for damage
 - Clean off cushions, seatbacks, and handles
 - Remove any rider-specific accessories/parts that aren't used by all
- **Annually/Semi-Annually (Before/After Seasonal Storage)**
 - Perform a comprehensive maintenance check. The manufacturer of your equipment should be able to provide the steps.

GRIT regularly meets both in-person and virtually with adaptive hiking organizations to ensure that their equipment is ready and that their team knows what to inspect.





CHAPTER 6

FUNDING SOURCES

TYPES OF FUNDING

Adaptive hiking programs are built from a diverse array of funding sources. Many programs rely on a combination of public and private financial support to cover expenses like adaptive equipment, staff training, and trail modifications. With a range of options to explore, budget shouldn't hold you back from building and expanding your programming.

What can be funded?

This answer varies by program, but may include some or all of the following:

- Adaptive equipment
- Program personnel
- Trail work
- Marketing
- Transportation costs

What funding methods should we consider?

In the pages that follow, we'll discuss some go-to ways to get funding for your soon-to-be-amazing adaptive hiking program. These options include **Internal Funding**, **Regional Funding**, **Grants**, **Donors**, and **Other**. As mentioned above, your program may benefit from a combination of these options.

Photo Credit: www.explorebrysoncity.com

Looking for funding assistance?

Because the goal of "finding funding" can sometimes be a bit intimidating, we created a form to help us help you! Click [here](#) to see and fill out GRIT's [Funding Finder for Organizations](#). The questions therein will tell us more about your organization so we can help narrow the funding search to include only the best-possible options.

Photo credit: [Catalyst Sports](#)



INTERNAL BUDGET

What Is This Option?

Your organization may actually have already have funds allocated to accessibility, education, and/or recreation—funds that may be removed if not used by the end of each fiscal year. The phrase “*if you don’t use it, you lose it*” absolutely applies here, and since the funds can be used toward equipment expenditures, staff training, marketing and event planning, and more, do some digging!

Why Explore This Option?

- The funds may already be waiting—no applications, interviews, or red tape.
- This *literal buy-in* can foster your team’s *emotional buy-in*. Using internal funding can quickly launch your adaptive hiking program and be a great way to rally your team around a shared goal.
- Depending on your organization and the type of adaptive hiking program you’re setting up, there may even be tax benefits to making your program and facility more accessible.
- Right the ship! Your organization may be over-allocating funds to other projects. This is an opportunity to review where funds are going and make an even greater impact.

Where to Find This Funding?

While the specific point of contact or department will vary by organization, consider consulting your accounting, operations, or human resources departments to inquire about additional funding.



Beaufort County, South Carolina, purchased GRIT Freedom Chairs with their county budget. After signing a liability waiver, members of the public can reserve and use these chairs for free! Shown here is Passive Parks Manager, Stefanie Nagid, riding one of those GRIT Chairs. Photo Credit: WTOC

MORNING BREAK

COUNTY PASSIVE PARKS PURCHASES ALL TERRAIN WHEELCHAIR
BEAUFORT COUNTY

WTOC
Live. Local. Now.
72° 9:31

REGIONAL FUNDING

What Is This Option?

Cities, counties, states, and the national government often set aside funds to help businesses of all sizes and structures to improve accessibility. Finding these funds can sometimes require some digging, but the reward can be tremendous (and repeatable)!

Why Explore This Option?

These funds are usually limited to specific jurisdictions, reducing competition—the application will be well worth your time! Also, regional funding is often replenished annually, meaning you can likely apply again in upcoming cycles. Finally, the sheer amount of available funds from regional sources can be staggering—enough to launch, maintain, and reinvigorate any adaptive hiking program.

Where to Find This Funding?

To get you started, check out these links to national funding options:

- State and Federal Departments of Transportation (DOT): The DOT provides funds through programs like [Section 5310](#) for improving mobility for seniors and individuals with disabilities. States also have their own DOTs with separate funding.
- [National Endowment for the Arts \(NEA\)](#): Supports projects that make arts and culture spaces more accessible.
- Community Development Programs and Parks & Recreation Programs: These exist at the city, county, and state levels. Search your particular city, county, and state websites for more information.
- Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA): This program provides funding for the development and maintenance of recreational trails and facilities. [Contact your state's program administrator](#) to learn how to apply for funding!

St. Louis Park, in Minnesota, funded an all-terrain wheelchair as part of their adaptive hiking program through the Hennepin County Active Living Program. The program's goal is to make it easier to be active. It provides technical assistance and funding for government agencies to plan for healthy communities and make active lifestyles more accessible.



GRANTS

What Is This Option?

Likely the most common source of external funding, grants can bolster your entire operation. Grants are *especially* important for small or nonprofit companies, as many grants are only available to these kinds of organizations. Grants are, of course, available for individuals as well, though each has its own applicant requirements.

Why Explore This Option?

- No obligation to repay. Unlike loans, which usually require your organization to pay back the lend amount plus interest, grants are about as close to “free money” as you can get.
- Mission and brand alignment. These granting organizations are usually specific to the adaptive recreation industry. This means that, in addition to some sweet, sweet funding, they can be a conduit for networking, partnerships, and more.
- Rolling application windows. Because each grant operates under its own timeline, you can almost always find one ready for your application.

Where to Find This Funding?

To get started, check out these popular granting agencies:

- [Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation](#)
- [Craig H. Neilsen Foundation](#)
- [AARP Community Challenge](#)
- [Grants.gov](#)
- [Hydro Flask’s Parks for All Program](#)

North County Land Trust, a regional land conservation organization in north central Massachusetts, purchased a GRIT Freedom Chair with a grant from [Bass Pro Shops and Cabela’s Outdoor Fund](#).



DONORS

What Is This Option?

Donors can sometimes be the keystone to the success of your organization. Whether these donors are individuals from around the world contributing to your crowdfunding campaign, corporate-level donors supporting your project, or close-to-home “Friends of” organizations that already support your park or organization, they can become an invaluable part of your strategy.

Why Explore This Option?

- Corporate donors can provide enormous amounts of funding; partnering with these donors may also allow you to leverage their PR and marketing power.
- Many people look for ways to make a personalized and specific impact on a cause that is important to them. Pursuing a donor or multiple donors can result in a perfect match and collaboration.

Where to Find This Funding?

If you are a park with a “Friends of” organization, contact them to inquire about additional funding for your project. They may ask you to present at an upcoming meeting, but these groups are often hungry for ways to support your park.



The GRIT Freedom Chair at Island Lake Recreation Area in Michigan State Park was generously donated by University of Michigan Medicine to improve accessibility to the area. Available for public use, this all-terrain wheelchairs provides a reliable and exciting off-road experience.



OTHER

This “other” funding category encompasses nontraditional and often privately funded paths, such as special awards given to local businesses, partnerships with other organizations, rental programs, and others.

Crowdfunding, for example, can be extremely effective, as donors may become vocal supporters and may even contact you directly to explore additional ways to help your adaptive hiking program. It can allow you to make connections with the most interested members of your community.

Another option is to seek funding from community organizations like local Lions Clubs—they can help you secure financial support and, like crowdfunding, can connect you with motivated community members. These connections can be instrumental in helping your program grow!

One final note: Implementing a rental or fee-based program can offset the costs of purchasing equipment, running the program, and promoting it. Charging a nominal participation fee may be a practical and reasonable approach, and in tandem with other funding options, can pay for current and future iterations of your program.


The West Michigan Lending Library has a GRIT Freedom Chair available for individuals to borrow. It was funded through a partnership with grant funding from Lori’s Voice, support from Moosejaw, and a crowdfunding campaign by the Lassig family,

Q Search How it works Start a GoFundMe

gofundme

Sign in Share

All Terrain Wheelchair Loan Program



\$2,710 raised

Share

Donations are turned off because the charity connected to this fundraiser is no longer supported by our payment partner. Discover other charity fundraisers.

Anonymous

\$25

6 mos

Anonymous

\$25

6 mos

rebecca bell

\$25

6 mos

Amy Garza

\$50

6 mos

Terrance burns

\$50


6 mos

2

Bridget Lassig is organizing this fundraiser to benefit Lori S Voice.

Learn more

Wheelchairs are meant for pavement. Imagine not being able to go on a trail walk, or across your yard with your family. We have joined efforts with Lori's Voice, Inc (a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization which was founded and established to help young people with disabilities) to raise funds to bring a GRIT All Terrain chair to West Michigan for people with mobility disabilities to borrow.



Below are just some of the organizations working to improve the availability and quality of adaptive hiking programs around the world! Thank you to these groups and to the many others aligned on this same mission.



Shepherd
Center



CITY OF
Denton
TEXAS



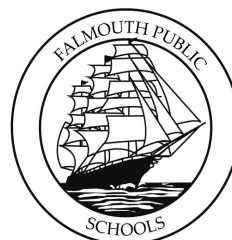
City of Reno's
**Adaptive
Cycling Center**



Victoria's Victory
Face It. Embrace It. Defy It. Conquer It.®



ADAPTIVE SPORTS
NORTHWEST



NO BARRIERS



**Kelly Brush
Foundation**
Life is Better Active



**Pennsylvania Center For
ADAPTED SPORTS**



AMERICAN TRAILS PTBA

dcr
Massachusetts

VA

U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

**HELEN HAYES
HOSPITAL**



BORP
ADAPTIVE SPORTS AND RECREATION



SOAR Experiences, Inc.



CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

Adaptive hiking programs both small and large have one thing in common: There's always more work to be done!

Whether you're investing in your first all-terrain wheelchair, refining your online signup process, partnering with local parks to improve signage, launching a fresh marketing campaign, or planning formal training for your team and volunteers, *go for it*. It matters. Just one of these efforts can be the difference between a wheelchair user *joining and loving* your program and having to spend another day indoors.

Your adaptive hiking program can have a profound impact—not only on the hikers who participate, but on the staff and volunteers who grow within it.

Do You Have More to Add?

Just as adaptive hiking organizations continually improve, so will this ebook! GRIT will be adding new information, spotlights, and more. If you have something to add to the ebook, please let us know! See our contact information on the following page.



CONTACT GRIT

We would love to talk through your adaptive hiking program,
select the right kind of equipment, and discuss how we can
work together to help more people enjoy the outdoors!

Phone:
877-345-4748

Email:
info@gogrit.us

[GRIT Website](#)

