

Mission

Promoting Indoor and On-water Rowing for Health, Fitness, Competition and Education For All Ages; For All Levels of Physical Ability

The *Adaptive Initiative* can trace its roots to August 16, 2004 when, upon the encouragement of **CIRC**, Illinois Lt. Governor Pat Quinn introduced Dr. Ed Melian on the banks of the Chicago River during his press conference on water quality. As an adaptive sculling competitor, Dr. Melian spoke eloquently of the need to develop inclusive programming with emphasize on-water accessibility for the disabled whether their interest be recreational or competitive. His words could not have been timelier.

The first championship adaptive rowing events were held in 2002 during the *FISA World Championships* in Seville, Spain and all expectations pointed to rowing being added to the *2008 Paralympics* at the next FISA conference in April 2005. Accentuating these expectations was the growing excitement among Chicagoans that a serious effort would be launched to bring the *2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games* to this great city of Broad Shoulders.



Dr. Ed Melian with Lt. Governor Pat Quinn & Arnold L Randall of CPD

Over the next several years, **CIRC** focused on understanding the issues and needs to develop successful programming. Key to this effort was building relationships with key city departments, educational institutions and non-governmental agencies and associations to buttress our mutual expertise to achieve a shared and common goal. The success of this effort is reflected in the working relationships that have since been developed:

[Adaptive Adventures](#)
[Chicago Park District](#)
[Chicago 2016](#)
[Great Lakes Adaptive Sports Association](#)
[Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs](#)
[Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities](#)
[National Center on Physical Activity and Disability \(NCPAD\)](#)
[Ray Graham Association](#)
[Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago](#)
[Schwab Rehabilitation Hospital](#)
[Shiners Hospital for Children](#)
[World Sport Chicago](#)

Adaptive Initiative Officially Announced: February 17, 2007

CIRC brought together individuals, organizations and manufactures involved in improving adaptive equipment to serve those with physical disabilities. The informal meeting provided Dr. Ed Melian, an adaptive rowing competitor, an opportunity to test current designs by **WinTech Racing** and **Chosen Valley Canoe** while offering insights on product improvement. As important, the event provided Mitch Carr, Larry Labiak, Cherrie Ong and Blythe Hiss a first-time look at indoor rowing and its possibilities for those with disabilities.

Set against the backdrop of the *9th Annual Chicago Indoor Rowing Championships*, it was our hope that this initiative would provide clarity and insight hence framing future discussions and open avenues for cooperative program development. The event exceeded our conservative expectations. Simply stated, all participants contributed constructive thoughts on program and hardware development that would make indoor and on-water rowing accessible to all.



Participants at CIRC 2007

Supporting Partners

Larry Labiak
Disabilities Policy Officer
[Chicago Park District](#)

Dr. Ed Melian
Adaptive Sculler

Ms. Blythe Hiss
Research Writer
[National Center on Physical
Activity and Disability
\(NCPAD\)](#)

Mitch Carr
Director of Fitness Service
[Rehabilitation Institute of
Chicago](#)

Mark Carroll
Midwest Representative
[WinTech Racing](#)

Kevin Carr
President,
[Chosen Valley Canoe](#)

AccessChicago 2007: July 25, 2007



Participants at AccessChicago

As the result of an introduction by Larry Labiak, Sharon Corrigan, Deputy Commissioner of the *Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities*, invited us to run an indoor rowing program at this annual event. We were ambitious and arranged an International Internet race with the cooperation of **Digital Racing** and their *RowPro* application. Since we anticipated participants with visual disabilities, we also installed *ErgChatter* that announces performance data at regular intervals.

While we were frustrated by glitches with Internet racing, our exhibit succeeded in introducing over 200 individuals to the possibilities of indoor rowing. It also afforded us the opportunity to meet Linda Mastandrea, *Chicago 2016 vice president for sport and accessibility* and become more familiar with the importance of the *Paralympic* component of Chicago's bid for the *2016 Olympic Games*.

Supporting Partners

Sharon Corrigan
Deputy Commissioner
[MOPD](#)

Charlie Portis
President
[Kayak Chicago Tours](#)

Kevin Carr
President,
[Chosen Valley Canoe](#)

Joel Berman
Executive Director
[Adaptive Adventures](#)

Mark Carroll
Midwest Representative
[WinTech Racing](#)

Pete Loeffen
President
[Digital Rowing](#)

Veterans Adaptive Activities Day: September 8, 2007



Participants at Veterans Adaptive Activities Day

Once again through the efforts of Larry Labiak, L. Tammy Duckworth, *Director, Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs* invited **CIRC** to participate in the *1st Annual Veterans Adaptive Activities Day*. Jointly hosted with the *Chicago Park District* at Northerly Island, the event gave veterans with disabilities the opportunity to try a wide variety of sports equipment with adaptive fitness specialists from across the region.

“Many of our service members leave for their tour of duty in the best shape of their lives and some return as Veterans with a debilitating injury. I know from first hand experience that the opportunity to exercise again can provide hope and health on a variety of levels,” Director Tammy Duckworth said. We hope that this event will introduce Veterans to various adaptive activities such sailing, kayaking, rowing, handcycling, golf, tennis, and wheelchair basketball, so they know you can still play your favorite sport even after you’re injured.”

“This event is a perfect example of our commitment to providing quality recreational opportunities and resources for all Chicagoans,” said Timothy Mitchell, General Superintendent of the Chicago Park District. “We are excited to participate in this inaugural event.”

Supporting Partners

Larry Labiak
Disabilities Policy Officer
[Chicago Park District](#)

L. Tammy Duckworth
Director
[Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs](#)

Kevin Carr
President,
[Chosen Valley Canoe](#)

Mayor Daley's Holiday Sports Festival 2007: December 28/30, 2007



Participants at the Mayor's Holiday Sports Festival

Chicago Indoor Rowing was invited by *Chicago 2016* to offer attendees to the annual *Sports Festival* an opportunity to experience indoor rowing. Although the general public may be perplexed by the notion of indoor rowing, by the end of the 3-day event that started on December 28th, more than 2,520 and perhaps as many as 3,700 youngsters, parents and grandparents had rowed their first 100+ meters with enthusiastic glee. Many came back for more as they challenged their siblings, cousins and friends to beat their score.

4 then 2 then 1

7 Indoor Rowing machines were available but only five were originally setup. We didn't expect what was to follow. Within the first hour, lines grew as attendees became intrigued with indoor rowing and the *Fish Game* on the computer monitor. To accommodate more first-time rowers, the *4-Minute Fish Game* was replaced by a *2-Minute Distance Challenge*. The lines still grew. We brought out the remaining 2 indoor rowing machines and changed the time to a *1-Minute Distance Challenge*. The waiting time became acceptable as those in line learned from those rowing. By days end, at the rate of seven every 2 to 3 minutes, 1,000 to 1,200 *Future Olympians* between the age of 6 and 15 had experienced the idea of rowing for the first time. The same excitement played out for the remaining days of the *Festival*.

New Adaptive Seat Tested

The *Festival* also allowed us to test the latest prototype seat developed by **Chosen Valley Canoe** allowing those with disabilities to participate in the indoor rowing experience. One of the indoor rowers was also made available to athletes competing in the *Wheelchair Basketball Tournament* as part of our testing/development program. The response was so encouraging that the **Chicago Indoor Rowing Championships (CIRC)** will host an *Adaptive Exhibition* as part of its annual competition to be held at Horner Park on February 16th 2008

Supporting Partners

Harold Gauthier
Events Coordinator
[Chicago 2016](#)

Linda Mastandrea
Vice President, sport and accessibility
[Chicago 2016](#)

Doug McCullough
[MarketingWerks](#)

South Side Classic Jr. Wheelchair Tournament: January 19, 2008



Participants at the South Side Classic

Sponsored by *The Claddagh Foundation & Great Lakes Adaptive Sports Association, (GLASA)*, this tournament was yet another opportunity in introduce indoor rowing to junior wheelchair athletes. It was also part of our efforts to expand our understanding of current sports programs for those with physical and visual disabilities.

Supporting Partners

Cindy Housner
Executive director
[GLASA](#)

Tom Daily
Program Director
[GLASA](#)

Robert J. Szyman
Coach
[RIC/Chicago Sky](#)

Adaptive 500-Meter Exhibition: CIRC 2008: February 16, 2008



10th Annual Chicago Indoor Rowing Championships

Few adaptive athletes are familiar with indoor or on-water rowing as a competitive or fitness possibility. With the introduction of Rowing to the Beijing *2008 Paralympics*, our mission is to build awareness of rowing among those with disabilities and support local and national program development. This event featured the following inspirational athletes who mentor others to break the bonds of limitation and aspire to achievement.

Competitors

Dr. Ed Melian, Adaptive Rowing Competitor & Adaptive Exhibition Coach

Mikel Vandello, Coach, Competitor and Paralympian, 1976, Toronto

Earl Jordon, 1998 Inductee: Wheelchair Softball Hall of Fame

Ramon Canellada, MVP Sled Hockey Team Senior Division 2000 Championship

Hector Bruno, Army Veteran Athlete: Sled Hockey, softball, basketball and handcycling

Camp Trek: June 18, 2008



Participants at CampTrek 2008

Camp Trek is a week long summer camp for children with physical disabilities offered by the **Great Lakes Adaptive Sports Association**. . A wide range of indoor and outdoor sports including: basketball, cycling, handcycling, kayaking, hockey, bocce, softball, tennis, aerobics, & arts & crafts are offered. Indoor rowing was introduced for the first time this year.

Supporting Partners

Cindy Housner
Executive director
[GLASA](#)

Tom Daily
Program Director
[GLASA](#)

Joel Berman
Director
[Adaptive Adventures/](#)

AccessChicago 2008: July 17, 2008



Participants at AccessChicago 20089

Once again, CIRC was asked by Sharon Corrigan, Deputy Commissioner of the **Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities** and Larry Labiak, the Disabilities Policy Officer for the **Chicago Park District**, to participate in this annual event within the **Park District's** activity area.

Supporting Partners

Sharon Corrigan
Deputy Commissioner
[MOPD](#)

Larry Labiak
Disabilities Policy Officer
[Chicago Park District](#)

Erich Schloemer
Midwest Representative
[WinTech Racing](#)

RIC Military Adaptive Sports Camp: July 19, 2008



Participants at RIC Sports Camp

This event provided service men and women a hands-on opportunity to learn about and try different Paralympic sports and to expand their resources to live a healthy, active lifestyle. We were invited to introduce participants to indoor rowing as part of this camp's activities. The camp also provided an opportunity to field test the latest Adaptive seat developed by **Chosen Valley** and discuss future joint programs.

Supporting Partners

Mitch Carr

Director of Fitness Service
[Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago](#)

Jenny DiLaura,

Paralympic Services Coordinator
[Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago](#)

Dawna Callahan

Paralympic Military Coordinator
[US Paralympics](#)

Continuing Initiatives

CIRC will continue to participate in events and programs to advance our mission embracing the belief that all are enriched when the doors to achievement are opened to those with disabilities

Land-to-Water Development Lab

The Lab will be an activities and development center. In addition to open programs, it will serve as an incubator to both the educational and health/fitness sectors while continuing to spearhead equipment innovation and improvement.

Lab Initiatives

- Adaptive equipment development and testing
- Special needs program development and training
- Big Brother/Sister programs
- Activity software testing and integration
- Grade and High School instructional program development/integration
- Land-to-Water transition program development
- Recreational and Competitive partnership development
- Recreational and Academic staff training
- Fire and Police Department co-op programs

Adaptive Water Program

Efforts are underway to launch a pilot program in conjunction with the **Lincoln Park Boat Club** and the **Chicago Park District**. This program will include both indoor and on-water rowing/paddling.

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