

Take a hike



Fall 2008

Looking back at triumphant year

British Columbia Mobility Opportunities Society (BCMOS) operates two main programs: hiking and gliding.

The hiking program, which uses a specially designed wilderness access wheelchair called a TrailRider, includes an intensive summer program and year-round rentals (\$10/day). Gliding uses Vancouver Soaring Association's facilities at Hope Airfield.

There were 82 program hikes during the 2008 season. These included 45 regular Wednesday-to-Friday outings at Vancouver's Pacific Spirit Regional Park, and 37 weekend theme hikes to various locations, which included overnight camping expeditions.

In addition to the above, TrailRiders were rented out 22 times during the summer season, which included the months of June, July and August.

Making all this possible were the 45 volunteers registered with BCMOS.

The gliding program, which ran April to September, registered 40 flights by 36 people – see Page 2 for more information about this program.

BCMOS once again took part in the Rick Hansen Foundation's Wheels in Motion event, held at PNE Playland. In addition, the TrailRider was displayed at Mountain Equipment Co-op in Vancouver. BCMOS supported another TrailRider expedition to Everest Base Camp, Nepal, (the first being last November).



Life at the top: Linda McGowan, and team, enjoying the view of Mt. Everest.

Intrepid explorers tell of epic Everest TrailRider adventure

Linda McGowan, of New Westminster, is just back from a breathtaking TrailRider trek to Everest Base Camp, Nepal, along with co-explorer Doug Reid. This is Linda's account:

The Black Diamond TrailRider offered comfort and, in conjunction with incredibly skilled porters, safety along narrow, rocky, steep ascents and descents. We traversed 18 suspension bridges, 8 metres to half a kilometre in length, some with sides, others without, but all bridging cliffs over deep rocky river crevices.

The TrailRider is ideal for rolling along smooth hillside trails. The uneven rocky terrain required that it be lifted about 50 per cent of the time. Seven or eight hours on the trail could be summarized as motivating, stimulating, sometimes a bit sore but always fun! The porters laughed and sang as we moseyed along.

Upon arising in the morning and embarking early on the path, looking around, we could see mountains, more mountains and after that, even more mountains. They

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BCMOS: outdoor adventure for people with disabilities

Gliding program is now more accessible thanks to a volunteer engineer's ingenious invention

An engineer enabled a gliding program for people with significant disabilities to reach new levels of accessibility.

British Columbia Mobility Opportunities Society (BCMOS) Easy Gliders program uses the clubhouse and equipment of Hope Gliding Centre, allowing participants to fly with an experienced pilot for between 45 minutes and one-hour.

Organizer James Willetts aims to open the sport to people with significant physical disabilities. A quadriplegic who experienced depression following a spinal cord injury, he hopes to install the belief that “there is life after becoming a quadriplegic or paraplegic.”

Willetts flew a glider for the first time in 2006 and the following year joined forces with BCMOS to launch Easy Gliders. However, it soon became apparent that a particular group of people were being grounded.

“We were having problems with clients with cerebral palsy and multiple sclerosis that would clench their legs together,” he explained. “There is no option to disengage the joystick – if you touch it, you’re flying the glider.”

Pilots, cannot take chances like that, and have to come right down when this happens – the result is that people that experience leg spasms were grounded.

Willetts turned to the Tetra Society, which recruits volunteer engineers, to create a simple mechanism to act as a barrier



Easy Gliders: Flights from Hope Gliding Centre through the summer.

between the client's legs and the joystick. Tetra volunteer John Connor started work on the project in May, working through the summer on his design.

“It was a bit of work, but worthwhile,” he said.

Easy Gliders held a Garage Sale at Celsia Florest store, (Arbutus and 4th Ave., Vancouver) on Sept. 7. This raised \$412 towards next year's program.

More info: www.disabilityfoundation.org/bcmos/gliding.php.

Everest TrailRider expedition – From Page 1



In suspense: trail bridge.

were rocky, snowcapped, encircled by glaciers, friendly, enticing, intimidating, challenging and sometimes ominous. At lower altitudes, there were trees, woody flowers, waterfalls and rivers.

As the treeline evaporated a wide open space gave way to many rock formations and memorials to those who have lost their lives on Everest. We were humbled and slowed to pay our respects to the women and men who had embraced their last dream.

Sitting in the TrailRider on Kala Patar, 2000 feet above the tent city of Base Camp, I was overwhelmed with the incredibility of being at the base of Mount Everest, the highest mountain in the world. How did this happen? It required a dream, motivation to follow that dream, and the belief of others – BCMOS, Eion White of Sherpa Encounter, Erik Bjoronsen of Courage to Carry On, donors, family and friends.

Do I have any regrets? No! Am I glad that I followed my dream? Of course! Would I do it again? In a New York minute!

Read more about the trek at: www.disabilityfoundation.org/bcmos/extreme_hikes.

Rockies event

This year's Access Challenge was held in the Rocky Mountains at Kananaskis, Alberta.

Access Challenge is a three-day trek, usually involving camping. This year's event was held Aug. 8 – 10 at Elbow-Sheep Wildlands Provincial Park, and saw five people with disabilities exploring the rugged provincial park and wildlife reserve.

The adventure was made possible by a team of volunteers, and the support of organizations including Friends of Kananaskis Country, Alberta Parks, and the Community Recreation Initiatives Society (CRIS) of Kelowna.