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Dear Readers,

I love this spring weather and am so happy when I can get outside to enjoy the sights and sounds of nature. However, for me, and millions of others who live with chronic illnesses and/or disabilities, enjoying the great outdoors can pose barriers and challenges of all kinds. Basically, I'd given up on the idea of ever being able to swim, canoe, and sail. I thought, "I could never do that" because of my severe disability; I have no use of my legs and only minimal use of my dominant right arm.

I WAS WRONG! No matter what your limitations are, there are ways you can participate and enjoy every outdoor activity imaginable. Here are a few opportunities to help you gain the experience and confidence to participate once again.

Just like the name says **Outdoors Without Limits** offers clinics for outdoor enthusiasts, pairing people with disabilities with those without in activities such as hunting, fishing, horseback riding, kayaking, climbing, archery, geocaching (using GPS technology to find "treasures" in the woods), sit skiing—virtually any outdoor activity. Their mission is to challenge stereotypes about disability and promotes awareness of "ability" in a positive environment. Participants engage in an experience that raises their spirits, highlights their ability, and shows that wheel chairs, prosthetic limbs, scars, and white canes don't define who people are or what they can do.

You can get involved and support the formation of an Outdoors Without Limits chapter in Wisconsin by attending the **Friday, June 13** fundraising event. The event will be held at the Monona Terrace and Convention Center in Madison and will feature such celebrities as Tom Farley, Chris Farley's brother; Coach Bill Yoast from "Remember the Titans;" Jean Driscoll, Olympian/Paralympian; football greats Al Toon and Scott Adams; Michael Cole of Mod Squad fame; and Ms. Wheelchair Wisconsin, Monica Kamal-Rossa. To purchase tickets or to become a sponsor for this event, call Park Towne Corporation at 608-833-9044 or visit www.ParkTowne.com. For more information on the organization, visit www.OutdoorsWithoutLimits.org.

The Department of Natural Resources, Wisconsin State Parks offers hundreds of special events all over the state during the first full weekend in June. Get out and enjoy:

National Trails Day (June 7) Special events are planned for hikers, bikers, and those with disabilities to explore Wisconsin's great trails.

State Parks Open House Day (June 8) Admission fees are waived, so people of all abilities may picnic, enjoy the scenery, and tour accessible cabins for future

camping trips. Whitefish Dunes State Park, in Door County, has adaptive equipment, including a beach wheelchair that allows people with disabilities the ability to walk the beach and view the amazing sand dunes.

Free Fishing Days (June 7 & 8) If you have every wanted to try fishing, Free Fishing Days events provide people of all ages and abilities the opportunity to experience the joy of fishing without a license or permit. Instruction and equipment is available at many locations.

For more information on events, activities, and accessibility, contact at 608-266-2181; <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/parks/>

Don Christianson is an avid sportsman with multiple sclerosis who wanted to continue his favorite activities – hunting and fishing. Over the years, he has compiled an extensive list of organizations that provide outdoor recreation opportunities, outreach and advocacy, mentors, and loaner equipment that help children and adults overcome barriers and enjoy the great outdoors. Some organizations like North Country Independent Living Center have a local focus; others like Fishing Without Boundaries, Adaptive Sportsman, and North American Squirrel Association (no it's not just for or about squirrels) are nationwide. Check out his Website: www.afarcry.info.

If you would like to learn more about Don and his journey, I will be interviewing him on my Making Life Easier Internet radio program in the next few weeks. Look for his and other interviews at www.WebTalkRadio.net. All past programs are archived at my Website: www.MakingLifeEasier.com (just click on the Internet Radio Program link).