



Arizona Spinal Cord  
Injury Association

# AZSCIA E-NEWS

May 2008

*"A monthly update on the happenings and upcoming events in the association."*

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We're on the Web!  
[www.azspinal.org](http://www.azspinal.org)

## Renee Tyree Appointed to National Council on Disability

Renee Tyree, board member of the Arizona Spinal Cord Injury Association was nominated by President Bush to serve on the National Council on Disability. Tyree will serve a three year term on the council in which she hopes to focus on returning people with disabilities to work.

The 15 person council is designed to enhance the quality of life of all Americans with Disabilities and their families. NCD members have to be nominated by the President, under go a thorough year long background check and are then approved by the Senate. The next step will be a swearing in statement at the Senate after Senator Kennedy's approval.

The nomination process has been extensive and detailed according to Tyree. But she looks forward to serving her term with great enthusiasm and zeal. Renee is clearly elated by "this very exciting and unimaginable honor."

NCD's purpose is to promote policies, programs, practices and procedures that guarantee equal opportunity for all individuals with disability, regardless of the nature or severity of the disability; and to empower individuals with disabilities to achieve economic self-sufficiency, independent living, inclusion, and integration into all aspects of society. In the past the NCD played a tremendous role in getting the Americans with Disabilities act signed into law.

Tyree has long served the disability community as an advocate. She was honored last October when she was inducted to the National Spinal Cord Injury Association Hall of Fame for her accomplishments in Sports and Athletics. She was recognized for being the only athlete to have received the gold, silver and bronze in the Paralympics in the same sport. Tyree was a member of the United States Women's Paralympic basketball team for 12 years. She won gold in Athens, silver in Barcelona, and Bronze in Atlanta. Tyree, a Tempe resident is also a pharmacist for Express Scripts. She has been an active member of the Arizona Spinal Cord Injury Association since its inception in 1999.

Executive Director Paul Mortensen of AzSCIA said, "Renee has been an outstanding advocate for the spinal cord injured since I have known her, she is a tremendous asset to our community."

Aside from serving on the Arizona Spinal Cord Injury Association's Board of Director's for the past six years, Renee also acts as a peer mentor to newly

injured SCI patients. Additionally she serves on the Women's Sports Foundation.

NCD is currently working on a series of reports known as Investigating Independence, which interrelate with centerpiece initiatives presented in President Bush's New Freedom Initiative. These reports focus on transitioning people from Social Security income to work, long term supports and services, the impact of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and financial incentives related to employment and living independently.

## Disability Empowerment Center of Arizona to Open in August 2008



**The Disability Empowerment Center of Arizona (DEC) is the future home of Arizona Bridge to Independent Living (ABIL), The Arizona Spinal Cord Injury Association (AzSCIA), and seven other non-profit organizations that serve people with disabilities. AzSCIA is a Chapter of National Spinal Cord Injury Association (NSCIA). Each organization shares a common history and vision for the future. The 65,000 square-foot center, located at 5025 E. Washington St. in Phoenix, broke ground in early 2007 and is expected to be completed this August.**

In addition to ABIL and AzSCIA, the DEC will house the Arizona Center for Disability Law, Raising Special Kids, the Arizona Chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Joni & Friends, the Statewide Independent Living Council, Arizona Autism United, The Brain Injury Association of Arizona and possibly others. A small amount of rental space is still available. Inquire by calling (602) 256-2245.

The campus will be a universally designed, accessible and transit-oriented non-profit resources center to serve the disability community. Its tenants will be provided with fully accessible administrative office space, meeting rooms, event space, a cafeteria and kitchen, computer lab and resource center, and a state-of-the art video conferencing center funded by the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust.

"The DEC will offer individuals with disabilities and their families empowering programs and integrated services and will create synergistic partnerships and collaborations that promote and enhance the choice, dignity, rights and

responsibilities of people with disabilities and their families," said Phil Pangrazio, executive director of ABIL.

The DEC will serve as a national model for accessible design. Future plans for the center also include a universally accessible sports and fitness center for persons with disabilities that is being funded through the City of Phoenix 2006 Bond program and private foundations that include: The Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust, the David Reese Family Foundation, Thunderbirds Charities, the Rhett Butler Family Foundation and others that are currently being pursued. Completion of the sports & fitness center is planned for the summer of 2009.

"We are excited to be part of this project and happy to partner with the other organizations involved in the campus" said Paul Mortensen, Executive Director of the Arizona Spinal Cord Injury Association. The mission of the AzSCIA is to enhance the lives of individuals with spinal cord injuries and their families in order to ensure the maximum possible physical, intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and social recovery.

Arizona Bridge to Independent Living programs are designed to empower people with disabilities to take personal responsibility so that they may achieve or continue independent lifestyles within the community. The independent living philosophy states that people with disabilities should have the same civil rights, options, and control over choices in their own lives as do people without disabilities.

This article is in the National Spinal Cord Injury Association's website, [www.spinalcord.org](http://www.spinalcord.org). Published on 04-17-2008.

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## Sedona Magical Mystery Tour

Come along on the Sedona Magical Mystery Tour! Experience Sedona as you have never experienced it. Your essay will win you a seat. ADA equipped handicap vans will pick up at AzSCIA location at 7:30am on Sunday and take you on a tour of Sedona and the Red Rocks. Experienced Tour Guides will bring the natural history of this Sacred Land to life including Native American and pioneer histories, geology, animal and plant life and share in the smorgasbord of sensory experience and energy that is heart of Sedona as you connect to your community and the people of the Verde Valley. Seating is very limited. Essays will be judged to decide who goes. Call AzSCIA at 602-239-5929 for details. Call Bill Thomason for agenda 602-321-7192.

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## River Rampage

**Who:** youth ages 14-20 young people with or with out a disability, including those with a significant mobility impairment

Usually have no camping or rafting experience

Do NOT need to be able to swim

Must live in Phoenix or the surrounding area

Must be able to follow directions, make their needs known and work cooperatively in a group

Must be willing to perform 40 hours of volunteer work to earn their trip

Must be ready to face new challenges and adventures, make new friends and have FUN!

Whatever their challenges these kids need a chance to see the world is bigger than their neighborhoods and that opportunities are available to them if they believe in themselves and trust others.

**When:** Three trips are offered each summer

**What:** River Rampage is an outdoor adventure activity program offered by the City of Phoenix Parks and Recreation Department and Adaptive Recreation Services. It was created for young people whom face significant challenges. Eight of the sixteen participants on each trip have a severe physical or mental disability. The remainder are young people who are at-risk or have faced their own challenges.

This project has brought the Canyon to life for hundreds of outdoor enthusiasts who previously were excluded from commercial river trips. Their challenges have included cancer, cerebral palsy, paraplegia, quadriplegia, severe closed head injury, spinal bifida, post polio syndrome, neurological disorders, arthritis, multiple sclerosis, cognitive disabilities, and visual and hearing loss.

Trips are offered each year, spanning one to two weeks and up to 225 river miles through pristine wilderness and some of the highest rated whitewater rapids in the country. The trips have paved the way for inclusive, accessible outdoor adventure opportunities, and have provided a dramatic example of what people with disabilities can do, given the chance.

For more information, or to request application forms for teen participants or volunteer adult support staff, please contact River Rampage staff at 602-534-5681 (Voice), 602-534-2491 (TTY), also email your questions to [tj.penkoff@phoenix.gov](mailto:tj.penkoff@phoenix.gov)

Applications are also available in large print and brail.

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## 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Assistive Technology Summer Institute Training in the

Register Now – Space Is Limited

Assistive Technology: Basics and Beyond  
June 2 – 3, 2008  
Wigwam Golf Resort and Spa, Litchfield Park, AZ  
(Located in the metropolitan Phoenix area)

NOTE: The RESNA ATP/S Examination will be administered after the conference on June 4th

Conference registration and detailed information are located on AzTAP's website at <http://www2.nau.edu/aztap-p/conference/index.shtml>. For questions, contact Martha Lewis at 602-728-9534 or [atconference@nau.edu](mailto:atconference@nau.edu).

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## ATEX – Online Assistive Technology (AT) Exchange Program

The Arizona Technology Access Program (AzTAP) a statewide Phoenix based program of Northern Arizona University's Institute for Human Development manages the **Assistive Technology Exchange website** (ATEX) - [www.azATEXchange.org](http://www.azATEXchange.org). The ATEX website is an online resource for Arizona residents to donate, buy, sell or exchange medical equipment, adaptive equipment and/or assistive technology (AT) of all forms. Assistive Technology is defined as any item, piece of equipment or product

system that is used to increase, maintain or improve the capabilities of individuals with disabilities. The ATEX website provides a forum for Arizona residents to advertise assistive technology items that are no longer being used so that they can get into the hands of someone who could possibly use or benefit from them.

With a computer and internet access individuals can review existing ads or post their own ads on the website. There are no charges to post or review ads on the ATEX website and AzTAP does not profit from the sale of posted devices or equipment. The ATEX website is intended to facilitate transaction of assistive technology between residents of Arizona and is not for the sale or procurement of equipment by vendors or retail distributors. For additional information about the ATEX program or for assistance with placing or reviewing ads, please contact Clayton Guffey – Assistive Technology Specialist at AzTAP at 602.776.4699, toll free at 1.800.477.9921 x 5 or by email at: [admin@azatexchange.org](mailto:admin@azatexchange.org).

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## Joni and Friends Outreach Program

Wheels for the World is an outreach program of Joni and Friends, a ministry to people affected by disability worldwide founded by Joni Erickson Tada, herself suffering from quadriplegia resulting from a spinal chord injury at age 17. Sheila and I take teams of therapists, mechanics and support people with about 200 restored wheelchairs per trip to Ghana West Africa two or three times a year bringing the gift of mobility and the message of the gospel to people who could never afford to buy the necessary equipment. Wheels for the World currently serves in over 15 developing countries including Poland, Ukraine, Brazil ,Peru, Cuba, Kenya, Ghana, India, Thailand and China.

Wheelchairs, walkers, crutches and canes are collected by individuals in the US known as Chair Corps, with whom Heidi Kalous plays a key role in Arizona (Heidi also serves on distribution outreaches). Approximately 10,000 used wheelchairs were collected by Chair Corps volunteers in 2007. The donated equipment is restored by inmates to like new condition in 17 prisons across the US then shipped by sea container to the countries served by "Wheels" teams. The teams of short term missionaries pay their own way to serve and are typically away from home from ten days to two weeks on a trip.

In the US, Joni and Friends, including the Phoenix Area Ministry headed by Pam Baldwin, works closely with churches to help them become more inclusive to people affected by disability, conducts annual Family Retreats to provide fun and respite for families with disabled members and advocates for the disability community in many other ways.

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## International Coalition Launches Groundbreaking Disability Rights Fund

**MARCH 31, 2008**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact: Diana Samarasan, Director**

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**Email: [dsamarasan@disabilityrightsfund.org](mailto:dsamarasan@disabilityrightsfund.org)**

**BOSTON, MA** – The Open Society Institute, The Sigrid Rausing Trust, the United Kingdom Department for International Development, and an anonymous donor today announced a groundbreaking collaborative to support the human rights for people with disabilities.

Launched on the first anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CPRD), the Disability Rights Fund<sup>1</sup> will provide financial support for human rights advocacy in the developing world and Eastern Europe/former Soviet Union. The broad objective of the Fund will be to empower disabled persons organizations around the world to effectively implement and monitor the CPRD.

"The Fund is a unique partnership among donors and the worldwide disability community," said Emily Martinez, Director of Special Initiatives at the Open Society Institute. "It will directly support the human rights work of disabled persons organizations in the developing world."

The CPRD recognizes that self-representation is essential to the enjoyment of human rights. It underscores the importance of including people with disabilities in the development of disability law, policies and programs. Through its unique governance structure, the Disability Rights Fund incorporates this principle.

A global advisory panel, made up of 12 individuals, most of whom are persons with disabilities, will provide recommendations on grantmaking strategies for the Fund; four of the Panel members will also serve on the Fund's grantmaking decision body. The members of the panel come from five continents and reflect a broad cross-section of the disability community. The majority were nominated by international and regional disabled persons organizations.

The structure of the Fund not only reflects the international disability community's slogan, "Nothing About Us Without Us," it also reflects a growing trend within the grantmaking community to better listen to the communities they seek to serve and to redefine the relationship between grantmaker and grantee in the interest of more effective grantmaking.

Grants disbursed by the Disability Rights Fund will be centered on three major areas: increasing the participation of persons with disabilities in their communities through trainings and networking opportunities; developing awareness of the CPRD among stakeholders; and supporting advocacy projects that promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights by persons with disabilities. The Fund expects to make its first grants in late spring/early summer 2008.

"The broad, international support for the Disability Rights Fund is a remarkable characteristic of this grantmaking enterprise. It is our hope that this diversity in funding sources will expand as the Fund develops," said Diana Samarasan, Director of the Fund.

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## CyberCIL of Arizona

CyberCIL of Arizona at [www.Cybercil.org](http://www.Cybercil.org), the first Virtual Center for Independent Living, is accepting applications for governing board members.

Centers for Independent Living (CILs) are typically non-profit corporations which are directed, managed and staffed by people with disabilities. CILs offer a variety of services for persons with disabilities and work within their communities to advocate for needed systems changes. CyberCIL is a Center for Independent Living (CIL) that exists entirely online providing an accessible resource for persons with disabilities throughout Arizona and the

online world.

The mission of CyberCIL of Arizona is to provide useful, cutting edge, assistance in accordance with the principles and philosophy of independent living to, and on behalf of, Arizonans with disabilities, so that they may attain or continue an independent lifestyle. Foremost among our principles, is the belief that people with disabilities must exercise power and authority over the programs and services designed to assist them.

Members selected to the governing board will promote CyberCIL's mission, participate in strategic planning, update/approve center policies and oversee CyberCIL's finances. All business will be conducted over the Internet. A majority of the Board of Directors must be people with disabilities. Criteria for acceptance on the Board of Directors include:

- Arizona Residency
- Knowledge and understanding of, and commitment to the principles and philosophy of independent living.
- The ability and commitment to participate on board committees and in online planning.
- The ability and commitment to review additions/ updates on a weekly basis.

Individuals who are interested in applying for the Board of Directors should send an email outlining their credentials to our Executive Director at: [jlbenshoof@CyberCIL.com](mailto:jlbenshoof@CyberCIL.com)

Come join our consumer directed Board of Governors and help us continue setting the course of the world's first virtual Center for Independent Living.

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## For Sale

Invacare Excelerator handcycle, excellent condition, 7 speeds, great for beginners to competitive cyclists, \$1,100. 480-229-7818

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## Upcoming e-news information.....

If there is anything that you would like to share with your fellow members, please contact Vangie Mortenson at 602-239-5929 or [vangie@azspinal.org](mailto:vangie@azspinal.org). She will ensure that the information will be posted on the e-news.

**THANK YOU!**