



Dawn Z. with her adapted kayak—Check out her story in the Featured Article on page 2.

**Our objectives:**

Provide an open forum for discussion on Spinal Cord Injury, Disease, and Paralysis related issues.

Provide mentoring and disability awareness.

Offer adaptive & accessible events & activities for the individual & the family.

Just have FUN!

**In this issue:**

2009 Meeting Information & 1

2009 Birkebeiner Sit-Ski Event 2

Announcements 2

Future Events 2

Featured Article 2

April—June, 2009

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# Madison's Spinal Cord Injury Group

We plan, We go, We conquer! | [www.sci-madison.org](http://www.sci-madison.org)

## 2009 MEETING INFORMATION

**Meetings are the second Monday of each month except for April 2009. Spouses, family members, & caregivers are welcome!** Topics are confirmed one month in advance. If you have a topic or speaker you would like to introduce, please bring them to the meetings or contact Monica KamalRossa at 608-288-0340 or email [Monica@SCI-Madison.org](mailto:Monica@SCI-Madison.org).

**Meetings are 5:30-7 p.m. at the Fitchburg Community Center, Stoner Prairie Room (lower level) 5510 Lacy Rd, Fitchburg WI.** 45 minutes are allocated for a topic and 45 minutes are for discussions and updates from the members themselves.

- Thursday, April 16, 2009—Potluck and socializing
- May 11, 2009—Yoga breathing by Dr. Margie Wilsman
- May (exact date tbd) - Get together at Memorial Union for open mic —Tim Austin facilitating
- Madison Marathon— May 24, 2009—Come out & cheer on our hand cycle team
- June 6— A “Day of Play” at Elvehjem Elementary School
- June 14—Madison Paddle Fest from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Wingra Park
- June 20 - Fishing with Adaptive Sportsman—John Martinson facilitating
- June 8 -Travel tips
- July 13 - TBD
- July 16— Wheels & Heels
- July 26- **Hope & Possibility 5K** roll/run/walk



John fishing <http://www.adaptivesportsman.org/>

**July 16, 2009** - Wheels & Heels 5k run/roll & 1k fun walk. This event is held on opening night of Festa Italiana (Milwaukee's Lakefront) and all participants get free admission into the festival. This year we are adding a hand-cycling category and hope to get more wheelchair participants. Please spread the word! Funds raised are donated to SCI/D research for a Cure!

- August 10, 2009—Picnic
- September 14, 2009—TBD
- October 12, 2009—TBD
- November 9, 2009—Anniversary Party
- December 14, 2009—TBD

Have an event you would like posted?

Email us at [info@sci-madison.org](mailto:info@sci-madison.org)



UW – Madison Engineering Students & Monica (Pictures from February Meeting) Dr. Judy Davis & SCI Members



## ADAPTING KAYAKING

**MAKING IT WORK** —By Dawn Ziegler

In 1985, I was in a car accident which left me with a C5-6 spinal cord injury. While pursuing a college degree in education, I became involved in an accessible sailing program and later began pursuing adapted physical fitness and other recreational sports. These experiences put me in touch with a lot of amazing people from whom I learned that making things accessible is not just a possibility but also a frame of mind.

Three summers ago, I decided it was time to try kayaking. I knew this was going to require a lot of creative problem solving because my physical ability presents some pretty significant challenges to work through. I don't have any use of my legs, fingers or stomach and lower back muscles. I have very little ability to balance myself side to side or front to back, and I do not have enough use of my hands to grasp and pull the paddle through the water. Also, the option of totally strapping me into a kayak with my hands secured to a paddle conflicts with needing to get out of the boat quickly if it should flip over. Pursuing kayak lessons was going to be a true test of patience and will, but I approached it with the same questions in mind as other activities I needed to adapt: "What do I need my body to do?" and "How can I get my body to function like that?"

The first step was to choose a kayak that offered the most stability with a cockpit large enough to make it easier to get me in and out of the boat. The kayak I used at my first two lessons had a large cockpit but was too tipsy for my comfort, so we made an outrigger by attaching to the rear of the kayak a paddle with inflatable floats on each end. There are outriggers out on the market, but this is an inexpensive alternative that works especially when first getting started. My next lesson I used an Old Town kayak because it has a larger cockpit and a more stable feel which eliminated the need for an outrigger.

The next challenge was to find a way to support my body without strapping me into the kayak. We first tried using a Crazy Creek camp chair, but this alone wasn't stiff enough to keep me from falling back and to the sides. The instructor found a flat piece of corrugated plastic (from an old sign) that was flexible enough to cut and shape around my body. To keep it in place, we strapped a wide elastic belt around this plastic brace and then put my life jacket over it. Although this was not a long term solution, it worked to keep me stable in the kayak so I could get into the water. At the next Canoecopia, I met Kevin Carr, proprietor of Chosen Valley Canoe Accessories in Minnesota, who had just designed the Universal Adaptive Paddling Seat. This seat has an adjustable back and lateral supports which are exactly what I was looking for. It can be used in canoes and some types of kayaks, and it's available for use in lessons at Rutabaga.

Finally, we worked on adapting a way for me to hold and use a paddle while still able to release it quickly if needed. First we tried sliding my hands under bike tire inner tubing which was attached onto the paddle. This didn't work because I don't have strong enough wrists to keep my hands under the tubing. We then tried some gloves that my instructor, Elizabeth Long, made that attached to the paddle with Velcro on the palm and three straps that slide over the back of the hand. Using these gloves with braces to support my wrists (carpal tunnel braces found in drug stores) have potential but need to be made with a more sturdy material. Then with the help of Cecil's Shoe Service, we attached these ¼ inch thick metal strips to the paddle with Velcro that I slide into heavy leather and plastic sleeves which are riveted to the palms of the wrist braces. These also worked but still need some adjusting.

Over the past 3 seasons working to adapt kayaking, not once did any of the dedicated individuals I worked with ever doubt that we were going to make it work for me. It's important to remember that adaptations are often "a work in progress" and require a lot of patience and persistence. Currently, I'm planning on investing in my first kayak and am anxiously waiting for the summer to begin paddling! Hope to see you out there!!

## BIRKEBEINER SIT-SKI EVENT

Five disabled athletes from Madison competed in the 3K/5K Sit-Ski Birkebeiner which took place February 2, 2009, on Lake Hayward. The event was sponsored by Becker Law Office. The newly developed adjustable sit-skis were designed by the Center for Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology at the University of Wisconsin Engineering Department.



Dennis S. at the starting line for the sit-ski race.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **New book reading club— contact Sandy or Liza for further information on dates, times, and current book for reading.**
- Did you know many of us mentor at the hospitals and rehab facilities?
- Did you know many of us speak at schools, universities, community colleges, and community meeting on spinal cord injury?
- **Check out our web site** for important posted links about adaptive equipment and more. [www.sci-madison.org](http://www.sci-madison.org)

## FUTURE EVENTS

May - Get together at Memorial Union for open mic  
Madison Marathon— May 24, 2009—Come out & cheer for our hand cycle team  
June 6— A "Day of Play" at Elvehjem Elementary  
June 14—Madison Paddle Fest from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
June 20 - Fishing with Adaptive Sportsman—John Martinson facilitating  
August—Picnic

November—  
Anniversary  
Party



Tim Austin  
target  
practicing