

Boeing-supported organization helps disabled veterans get back into the game

Sept. 6, 2007



1LT Jeffrey Adams (U.S. Army, Retired), pictured here, had never skied before, but through unwavering determination achieved Professional Ski Instructors Association (PSIA) certification despite losing a leg above the knee in Improvised Explosive Device (IED) attacks in Iraq.



Former Army specialist Oscar Alguin (pictured here), a snowboarder, also achieved Professional Ski Instructors Association (PSIA) certification, and participated in the Air Force's annual SnoFest event at Keystone resort in Colorado.



Joel Berman (left), executive director of Adaptive Adventures, is pictured on the ski slopes with DeForest Hamilton, Boeing Global Corporate Citizenship representative for Colorado, and Jeffrey Adams. Last year alone, more than 70 veterans were able to relearn a sport they loved or try a new one, thanks to financial support from Boeing.

Timing is everything, and for Adaptive Adventures, Boeing support could not have been better planned. Since its founding in 1999, the Evergreen, Colo.-based organization has helped thousands of physically challenged individuals realize freedom through mobility. But with increasing numbers of injured veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, Adaptive Adventures' mission is being put to the test.

The organization's Disabled Military Recreation Program provides sports rehabilitation programs for veterans who have suffered severe and permanent injuries. Not long ago these young men and women were in top physical shape. The changes caused by their injuries extend beyond the physical, challenging their emotional and psychological well-being. Families are affected, too, as they wonder whether they will ever again live normal lives.

For many, Adaptive Adventures offers the promise of a bright and active future. With the proper adaptive equipment and under the guidance of trained instructors, veterans can successfully participate in sports and recreation activities such as skiing, cycling, rafting, water skiing or other water sports. This accomplishment represents a triumph over disability and sets the stage for a positive self-image and future outlook.

Boeing's involvement with Adaptive Adventures dates back three years. Last year alone, more than 70 veterans were able to relearn a sport they loved or try a new one, thanks to financial support from Boeing. But it was this year's skiing program that provided a pivotal moment,

according to DeForest Hamilton, who manages Boeing's Global Corporate Citizenship investments in Colorado.

Participants 1LT Jeffrey Adams (U.S. Army, Retired), and former Army specialist Oscar Alguin, a snowboarder, had lost their legs above the knee in Improvised Explosive Device (IED) attacks in Iraq. Jeffrey, a Mississippi native, had never skied before, but through unwavering determination achieved Professional Ski Instructors Association (PSIA) certification. With the skill and confidence gained through Adaptive Adventures, the men went on to participate in the Air Force's annual SnoFest event at Keystone resort in Colorado. During the dinner gala, Jeff and Oscar were welcomed as heroes by General Kevin Chilton, USAF, with a lengthy standing ovation.

"It was an amazing and inspiring experience for Jeff and Oscar and for all of us in attendance," said Hamilton, a Navy Reservist himself. "These gentlemen are representatives of our next Greatest Generation."

Events such as SnoFest represent just one example of how Adaptive Adventures is helping improve the quality of life for the men and women of the military. Boeing is a critical part of the mix, according to the organization's executive director, Joel Berman.

"Colorado is the site of many military bases. This community-within-a-community appreciates the commitment Boeing has made. As for our program, it wouldn't be what it is today without the support we receive," Berman said.