



Leadership in Adapted Fitness

“Diversability is a celebration of all abilities and the opposite of a disability!”

-Tim Gattenby

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Leadership in Adapted Fitness takes a trip to the Abilities Expo in Boston

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In September 2019, Leadership in Adapted Fitness took a trip to Boston, Massachusetts to explore the Abilities Expo. In total, we had 13 students along with our club supervisor, Tim Gattenby, make the trip to Boston. The expo was held in the Boston Convention Center and featured many cutting-edge products and services, adapted sports and activities for better health, informative workshops, daily living aids, and many life-changing activities and products for individuals of all ages.

Leadership in Adapted Fitness was started by Tim Gattenby, creator of Adapted Fitness, a program on campus in which student helpers create rehabilitation programs for individuals with disabilities. Tim saw that many students were returning to Adapted Fitness for multiple semesters, and he wanted to provide them with leadership opportunities. When the club was first created, Tim wanted students to have the opportunity to be leaders in the community and assist with more than just class.

Right away, the club helped with the quality and quantity of opportunities for individuals with disabilities in our community. With the help of Leadership in Adapted Fitness, many of the clients in Adapted Fitness attended the Birkebeiner, the largest cross-country ski marathon, and they were able to sit-ski themselves. It is through Adapted Fitness that we are able to provide these individuals with opportunities to become more independent and try things they never thought they could.

Soon after the Birkebeiner created an adapted ski event, Badger State Games also wanted to create an adapted skiing event for clients. They went above and beyond, creating different divisions based on experience, gender, and age. They also sought our input on how to make the


experience better for clients and students, and they put in a lot of effort into making the event great for everyone.

Another group that has been instrumental in adaptive skiing for our clients is CXC, an organization that works to make cross country skiing accessible to individuals with physical disabilities and visual impairments, and Don Becker, a disabilities rights lawyer and avid skier. Together, they donated all the sit-skis to Adapted Fitness for all of our clients to use and enjoy, and their donation has made a huge difference in Adapted Fitness.

Leadership in Adapted Fitness also spreads awareness about the work that goes on within class. Every spring, the Department of Kinesiology and Adapted Fitness hold an open house to showcase the amazing work that goes on throughout the year with students and clients. Anyone is welcome to attend the open house and see the hard work and dedication put forth by all the student staff and clients during class.

Most recently, students from Leadership in Adapted Fitness got to travel to Boston, Massachusetts for the Abilities Expo. The expo provided students with the opportunity to learn about all the new technology and advancements becoming available to individuals with disabilities. There were 107 booths in total, and many more workshops, demos, and free activities.

Current Co-president of LAF, Emily Johnson described the expo. “The Abilities Expo was a great way to apply what we learned in Adapted Fitness and apply it to programs and companies across the nation! Also, it was a unique way to bring back information to better our clients and the program.”



One element of the expo that we can connect to Adapted Fitness is the many adapted bikes we saw. Many clients in Adapted Fitness use adapted bikes, and we have bikes that can accommodate individuals with all sorts of abilities. The expo gave us an opportunity to see all the new technology that we may be able to provide for our clients in the future.

Also at the expo was Mark Wellman, a pioneer in adapted climbing and an inspiration to millions of individuals all around the world. Wellman is paralyzed from the waist down, but that does not stop him from doing what he loves including climbing, becoming a park ranger, or being a Paralympian. He has a no limit philosophy that encourages individuals to strive “unreachable” goals. Wellman also provided adapted climbing equipment so that individuals with diverse abilities at the expo could use the climbing wall.

Overall, the Abilities Expo provided members of Leadership in Adapted Fitness a unique opportunity to expand and apply the knowledge they gained at UW-Madison to the real world.