

faces of angels

—ADAPTIVE ADVENTURES—

Ryan's story

by Joel Berman

When I think about an individual who Adaptive Adventures has helped over the years, I quickly thought of 12-year-old Ryan Wright of Conifer. Ryan was born with spina bifida and, although he can walk, he spends most of his time in a wheelchair, he enjoys school (language arts is his favorite subject), the outdoors, and being with his two brothers and grandparents.

Ryan's first Adaptive event was our Stars of Tomorrow Summer camp about four years ago. I realized immediately he was willing to participate in any activity offered, embracing every challenge that was put before him with an enthusiastic attitude that is simply unmatched.

A faithful attendee of our Summer Camp, Ryan likes basketball, rugby and tennis; although his favorite is hand-cycling because he goes "really fast." Even Ryan will tell you that his camp experiences have helped him tremendously, both physically and mentally.

"The summer camps help me keep active and stay strong, and they just make me feel good," he says. "They are so much fun, and I get to meet new kids a lot like me every summer."

Whether it's our Stars Summer Camp or Junior Wheelchair Camp, you can bet Ryan does it all. You can also find him mono-skiing in Breckenridge with his brother, dad and grandparents. He even laughs when he talks about his first water-skiing experience at camp. "The very first time I did it, the boat

dragged me and my monoski came flying off. There I was in the cold water and I had to swim back to shore!"

Ryan understands how important our organization and our Adaptive Sports for Kids programs are in his life and also in the lives of other kids like him. After all, Adaptive gives Ryan the opportunity to do things that youth without disabilities do every day. He is just one example of the hundreds of youth we've helped over the years.

Since 2002, we've offered many ski and outdoor camps and clinics each year to more than 500 adaptive youth from the Midwest and Colorado. Our Stars of Tomorrow Ski Camps bring youth to Vail to experience skiing, snowmobiling and tubing. The Colorado Junior Wheelchair Camp offers children the opportunity to experience hand cycling, tennis, basketball, hockey, water-skiing, softball, soccer and even sailing. Our organization features a large number of staff and volunteers with disabilities who offer expert instruction and are positive role models.

We continue to be grateful for our support from the community and donors. Seeing the ear-to-ear smiles that our programming brings to the faces of Adaptive youth like Ryan makes it all worthwhile. As Ryan says, "It's sweet!"

Joel Berman is the executive director of Adaptive Adventures. Contact Adaptive Adventures at 303-679-2770.



RYAN WRIGHT OF CONIFER "DOES IT ALL"—DESPITE SPINA BIFIDA.

