

Handicapped Scuba Association News



Quadriplegic Diver Candidate Takes the Plunge as Byblos Niagara Resort & Spa Announces their Sponsorship of the Handicapped Scuba Association

Grand Island, New York – March 31, 2014 – The liberating world of SCUBA is now a fun and exciting option for disabled people in the Western New York area with its first student, Tom Schofield of Burford, Ontario, a quadriplegic. After 30 years out of the water, and a few false starts to learn SCUBA diving, Tom was finally able to realize his dream of training to become a diver with the help of the regional Handicapped Scuba Association (HSA) Training Team, Byblos Niagara Resort & Spa and Adventure Scuba and Watersports.



Shown above, Tom Schofield arriving at Byblos Niagara Resort & Spa for first plunge into a pool in 30 years! (In photo with Tom from left to right: Jaia Konik, HSA Divemaster and HSA Team photographer; Felicia Kostecky, HSA Course Director; Tom Schofield; Adam Kostiw, HSA Divemaster, Patty Mash, Byblos Niagara Resort & Spa Fitness Manger.



Shown above, Tom Schofield preparing for his confined water (pool) dives at Byblos Niagara Resort & Spa, with HSA Course Director Felicia Kostecky and HSA Divemaster Adam Kostiw.



Shown above, underwater for the first time!!! Assisted by HSA Course Director Felicia Kostecky

“We are so excited to welcome Byblos Niagara Resort & Spa to our HSA Family. Finding indoor pool facilities for training that are accessible and affordable, is a very difficult barrier to overcome. Byblos Niagara Resort & Spa has opened their doors to us and removed this barrier”, says Felicia Kostecky, Program Director and native Western New Yorker.

The Byblos Niagara Resort & Spa program was formalized with the on-hands assistance and vision of Corey McGowan, Special Events Director at Byblos Niagara Resort & Spa.

The regional HSA training programme was launched in August by Ms. Kostecky, with the help of HSA International Founder, Jim Gatacre who came in from California for the course which graduated their first class of students who will act as divemasters and dive buddies to the disabled... from quadriplegics to the blind. The graduates, all from the Niagara Frontier area, are now qualified to help the disabled experience life underwater and all the fascinating discoveries there. “These students will form the base for sharing the joys of SCUBA with more people who otherwise would not have access to the wonders of

Handicapped Scuba Association News



hsascuba.com

the underwater diving experience,” said Kostecky, “it is an exhilarating experience for both the diver and their buddy.”

“The demand for Scuba for the disabled is strong; it brings a new world of freedom, exploration and activities that they can really enjoy,” says Gatacre. “There has been considerable excitement in the region from both the US and Canadian sides of the border.”

“It was a thrill to see Tom back in the water after 30 years and take his first breath underwater on SCUBA”, says Mr. McGowan. Added Schofield, “If I could sum it up, I would say the experience was *other worldly*, it is like going back to my carefree youth - in one word: Awesome!!”



Shown above, Tom independently removing and replacing mask as Felicia and Adam observe and Jaia captures the moment on film.



Shown above, Tom underwater on SCUBA for the first time, getting a feel for his mobility and the freedom of the water! (With Felicia Kostecky HSA Course Director and Adam Kostiw HSA Divemaster)

Handicapped Scuba Association News



A happy crew at the end of the first pool session. Shown from left to right: (back) Jaia Konik, HSA Divemaster and HSA Team photographer; Adam Kostiw, HSA Divemaster; (front) Felicia Kostecky, HSA Course Director; Tom Schofield; Corey McGowan, Byblos Niagara Resort & Spa Special Events Manager.



Kostecky is encouraging everyone who is interested to contact her, either directly, through Adventure Scuba & Watersports www.adventurescuba.ca, or through the regional HSA Training Team website www.paraquadics.com.

There are over 3.6 million Canadians and over 49 million Americans with disabilities. SCUBA is a fun way for many to leave their limitations behind. "There are snorkelling and skin diving opportunities for the disabled if they have limitations that prevent the full SCUBA experience" adds Kostecky. "These provide an introduction or alternative that still lets them enjoy the underwater world experience."

Ms. Kostecky and Mr. McGowan are available for interviews.

Video and Photos: Video of the session is available for viewing and download here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cxj_rZitX30. Higher resolution video and photos available on request.

About the HSA:

The Handicapped Scuba Association International (HSA) is dedicated to providing access to the enjoyment of SCUBA to the estimated 3.6 million Canadians and 49 million Americans with disabilities and millions of others around the world. The HSA provides training to instructors and assists in organizing dives through the recruitment of dive buddies for the disabled.

The HSA was founded in 1981 by Jim Gatacre and is the world's leading authority on recreational diving for people with disabilities. Headquartered in California, the HSA extends its underwater educational programs worldwide. The HSA prestigious diver education programs and Instructor Training Course (ITC) are internationally recognized and unequaled by any other programs in the industry. These programs were developed in conjunction with two major certifying agencies, PADI and NAUI.

The HSA has more than 3,500 qualified instructors in 45 countries around the world.

For additional information, please visit www.paraquadics.com or contact:

Felicia Kostecky
Regional HSA Program Director
Phone: 905-704-8495
email: felicia@kostecky.ca

Corey McGowan
Special Events Manager
Byblos Niagara Resort & Spa
Phone: 716-773-1111
email: cmcgowan@byblosniagara.com



Handicapped Scuba Association News

