It was a cold, cloudy Saturday afternoon in Raleigh, North Carolina. Yet inside a local community center, the competition was heating up. Athletes in wheelchairs sped up and down a court, dribbling, passing and blocking their opponents from scoring. Occasionally a loud scrape of metal upon metal interrupted the action as chairs smashed into each other.

The game is quad rugby. Played on a basketball court with a volleyball, the object is simple: score points by crossing the goal line with the ball. On the other hand, the strategies for scoring and blocking are complex and aggressive. It’s not unusual in this full-contact sport for a player to flip out of his chair or have a tire blow out in the middle of a game. Surprisingly, despite the rough-and-tumble nature of the game, it provides opportunities for athletes with quadriplegia who have a wide range of functional levels.

Chad Foster of Marietta, South Carolina, is a quad rugby player. Sustaining a C-6/7 spinal cord injury at birth, he also has very little use of his left arm. Eighteen years ago, he joined the Carolina Crash, a quad rugby team in Charlotte, North Carolina. The ten-member team, whose players come from North and South Carolina, is sponsored by the Adaptive Sports and Adventures Program at Carolinas Rehabilitation in Charlotte. While Foster found himself at a disadvantage when he played basketball with physically stronger paraplegics, quad rugby put him on a more equal playing field. A rating system assigns points to each player based on strengths and abilities, ranging from .5 to 3.5. “The lower the points, the less hand function,” Foster explained. “I’m a ‘1’ so I’m a defensive player. The guys who are rated ‘3’ and up have the really good hands and play offense, carrying the ball the most.”

Foster’s quad rugby chair was constructed specifically for his position and built to take the abuse of the game. “The pick bar on the front is used to ram into other people. I love going out and hitting with a purpose,” he said. Foster is highly competitive and has physically pushed himself over the years. “I’ve learned to use my right arm to compensate for what my left arm can’t do,” he said.
Peer Visitors Making One-On-One Connections

They get it. More than a spouse or a parent or the most skilled physical therapist. The South Carolina Spinal Cord Injury Association’s volunteer peer visitors understand what it’s like to live with a spinal cord injury. Day in and day out. Year after year.

Peer visitors reach out to others whose lives have also been changed by paralysis. Sometimes it’s at a rehabilitation hospital, only weeks after injury. Other times it’s at someone’s home months or even years down the road.

“By sharing your story you can show that you went through the same thing and that there is life after injury,” said Terry Shortt. The co-leader of the Rock Hill Breeze Group, he sustained a T-2 injury in a bicycle accident seven years ago. “We talk about everything from how they get dressed to transportation issues to their attitude about what’s happened to them,” Shortt said of his conversations as a peer visitor.

Four years ago Daniel Lamb received a visit from Shortt, not long after his T-12/L-1 injury. Lamb was 33 when a mishap out in the woods pinned him under his three-wheeler. Despite Lamb’s foggy recollection of their initial meeting, he made a connection with Shortt that has lasted long beyond the visit. “Terry has helped Danny

As Lamb learned to live with a spinal cord injury, he found that he didn’t need to let go of the activities he loved. Instead he finds a different way to do them.
with a lot of things,” said Lamb’s girlfriend Lela Braswell. “He’s gotten him to the gym, encouraged him to start volunteering with a wheelchair repair ministry and boosted his confidence.” Lamb regularly attends the Rock Hill Breeze Group and makes phone calls to remind group members of upcoming meetings and events.

As Lamb learned to live with a spinal cord injury, he found that he didn’t need to let go of the activities he loved. Instead he finds a different way to do them. “He still hunts, but he does it from the ground since he isn’t able to get in a deer stand or climber. He’s changed the places he goes fishing because he can’t always get to the bank. If Danny wants to do something, he finds a way,” Braswell explained. Now serving as a lieutenant over the trucks and equipment, Lamb continues his involvement with the local volunteer fire department he joined more than 15 years ago. He can also be found changing firefighters’ oxygen tanks at the site of a fire and directing traffic as needed.

“By sharing your story you can show that you went through the same thing and that there is life after injury.”

~ Terry Shortt

“It’s all about adapting and overcoming challenges,” Lamb said of his life over the last four years. “When you’re new at this, there’s a lot you don’t know about,” he recalled. So early on, he set out to gather the information he needed for his new life. “Lela, my mom, and Terry were all looking into things for me,” he said.

Shortt was happy to be part of that process, to make someone’s adjustment a little easier than his own. “I would have loved to have had a visit when I was first hurt,” he said. His wife Donna agrees. “Terry didn’t want to get out of the house at first. It would have helped so much just to know that there were people out there that we could have talked to,” she said.

To request a peer visit, contact the association at 803-252-2198. Visits can be requested by individuals with spinal cord injuries, as well as by family members and professionals. (An individual must give consent for a visit if the request is being made by another person.) Visitors will be matched, as closely as possible, based on injury level, gender and geographic proximity.

Interested in becoming a volunteer peer visitor? Contact the association at the number above. All peer visitors undergo a state background check, receive initial training, and are provided with annual in-service education.
Additional Participants Sought for Research Survey

A mailing was sent out in February to members of the South Carolina Spinal Cord Injury Association about a mail-in survey for a study being conducted by the Medical University of South Carolina. More participants are needed for the study titled “Measuring Outcomes after Spinal Cord Injury throughout South Carolina: A System of Tracking, Research, and Referral.” Participants need to be 18 years and older and have a traumatic spinal cord injury.

The goal of the study is to develop a statewide database in order to gain a better understanding of access to health services and the health of people with spinal cord injuries in South Carolina. Interested in participating in this study and other research studies in the future? Then register online with the South Carolina Spinal Cord Injury Association to receive priority updates about research. Follow the steps below to register. No Internet Access? Call the association toll-free at 866-445-5509 and a staff member can complete the registration process over the phone.

1) Go to www.scspinalcord.org.
2) Select the Health Care/Research tab at the top of the page.
3) Scroll down to the South Carolina Spinal Cord Injury Research Fund heading.
4) Click on the South Carolina Spinal Cord Injury Research Fund Participation Form link and complete the form.
5) A researcher will be in touch about the mail-in survey.

Becoming A Member of United Spinal Association

The South Carolina Spinal Cord Injury Association is a chapter of United Spinal Association, a national nonprofit organization that serves individuals with spinal cord injury or disease. South Carolina is one of more than 40 United Spinal chapters in 28 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. United Spinal Association replaces the National Spinal Cord Injury Association, which it acquired four years ago.

Individual membership in United Spinal Association is free and open to people with spinal cord injuries or disorders, family members, caregivers, and professionals. To join, simply complete the membership form at unitedspinal.org. A free subscription to New Mobility Magazine is provided to each member. For more information: 718-803-3782.
Vocational Rehabilitation Loan Program

The South Carolina Department of Vocational Rehabilitation offers a loan program to help individuals with disabilities obtain assistive equipment and services they need to become more independent. The program can be used to finance a broad range of purchases, including wheelchairs, vehicles and vehicle modifications, home modifications, and computers.

Individuals must have the ability to repay the loan, though the criteria for the guidelines are much less stringent than those used by most banks. This provides an opportunity for many people to be approved for a loan who would otherwise not qualify. Loans range from a minimum of $1,000 to a maximum of $30,000. For more information or for a loan application, contact: Clayton King, Loan Program Manager, 803-726-7143.

Let’s Go Surfing Now: Everyone Is Learning How

Sherwood Toatley didn’t let a C1/C2 incomplete injury get in the way of going surfing for the first time. Toatley was one of 32 individuals with disabilities who came out for Wheel to Surf on May 16. The adapted surfing event in North Myrtle Beach was sponsored by three organizations: Coastal Caroling Adaptive Sports and Recreation, Ocean Cure, and the Adaptive Surf Project.

Additional adaptive surfing events have been scheduled for September 12 in the Grand Strand area and September 26 in Folly Beach. Interested in participating? Call Brock Johnson at 843-333-0489. Want to join the team of volunteers who make the event possible? Email Melinda Chappell at mechappell@nmb.us.
Sand Rider Beach Wheelchair
The Sand Rider off-road custom beach wheelchair is engineered from the ground up to be light and durable and easy to push even in deep sand. The chair can also be used on gravel, trails, grassy fields, swampy areas or snow. It can be disassembled for transport and reassembled for a day at the beach.

GRIP Lap Board
With non-slip material on both sides, the GRIP Lap Board is ideal for transporting items such as hot foods, drinks, electronics, school and work materials, and many other items used while performing daily activities. It will fit comfortably on an individual’s lap while keeping items securely in place.

Blue Ant COMMUTE2
Make and receive phone calls without the need to touch a phone using the BlueAnt COMMUTE2 kit. Just say "Launch Voice Control" and the voice activated COMMUTE2 does the rest. The kit can be used in the car, as well as being an invaluable piece of equipment to use at home.

Reeve Foundation Grant Enables Association
The South Carolina Spinal Cord Injury Association recently purchased a number of pieces of equipment, funded by a Quality of Life Grant from the Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation. The equipment is available to borrow at no cost for individuals with spinal cord injuries and the professionals who work with them. This new service provides people the opportunity to fill a short-term need or to try out different assistive technology options before making a decision to purchase. All the equipment will be loaned out through South Carolina Assistive Technology Program in Columbia, which is partnering with the association on this service.

Ready to test a piece of equipment?
To borrow a piece of equipment, contact the South Carolina Assistive Technology Program at 800-915-4522 or visit the association’s website at www.scspinalcord.org/free-equipment-loan-program.
To Establish Free Equipment Loan Program

**Power Buddy**
The Power Buddy charges most portable electronic devices such as cell phones, MP3 players, GPS, and tablets. It installs in seconds, connecting to the charging port on power wheelchairs and scooters. It also doubles as a headlight. Note: The Power Buddy is not compatible with iPads, though it will work with iPhones.

**Para Ladder**
The Para Ladder is a manual lift that enables wheelchair users to safely transfer from wheelchair to floor independently. It can also be used to transfer into swimming pools, hot tubs and boats. The lightweight aluminum frame is weather resistant and has up to a 300-pound capacity.

**FLEXRIMS**
The Spinergy FLEXRIM is a low impact pushrim that helps reduce the risk of overuse injuries and makes it easier to push a manual wheelchair. It allows the user to push without ever touching the tire. The pushrim can flex in, giving the user an extra inch or so when squeezing into tight doorways. The FLEXRIM is available in 24 inch and 25 inch sizes.

**FreeWheel**
The FreeWheel wheelchair attachment lifts wheelchair casters off the ground, turning a manual chair into a three-wheeler that can roll over any obstacle: curbs, dirt trails, grass, gravel, snow, and sand. The FreeWheel will work with a rigid frame or folding wheelchair. Because the FreeWheel requires a custom installation, it is only available for demonstration and not on loan.

**Portable Ramps**
These aluminum portable ramps can be used on steps, patios, minivans, and more. They are 30 inches wide, compatible with almost any standard wheelchair, scooter or walker, and support up to 800 pounds. The ramps are available in 4-foot and 6-foot lengths.
While energized by the three or four tournaments the team plays every year, Foster has found that the impact extends way beyond the sport. He has had the opportunity to travel around the United States and Canada, make a “lifetime of friends,” and enjoy the relaxed camaraderie between games.

Though paralyzed for all of his 38 years, Foster found there was still a lot he did not know: “I started observing other quadriplegics doing stuff off the court, like some of their transfers and the way they’d suit themselves up before a game.” Eventually what he learned from his teammates and other players enabled him to switch from a power chair to a manual chair and to complete everyday tasks quicker and without assistance.

“One of the biggest things he did was when he quit driving a van,” said his dad Johnny, who serves as the team’s equipment manager. “I even have a truck now that I pull myself into,” Foster said with a satisfied smile. “I don’t use it every day; I bought it to have fun in.”

Mike Duda, an equipment sales manager who volunteers as the Carolina Crash Coach, has seen many success stories like Fosters that occur off the court. “As players see other athletes with the same injury level and discover tricks to being more independent, they are enjoying life more. While there is always the thrill of winning, what I really like is watching these guys learn and grow.”

It’s not unusual in this full-contact sport for a player to flip out of his chair or have a tire blow out in the middle of a game.