

Promoting Access to the Jordan River Corridor for Utahns with Disabilities through Wasatch Adaptive Sports' 2020 Adaptive Cycling Program

Project Overview

Wasatch Adaptive Sports (WAS) respectfully requests support from the Jordan River Commission for the organization's Adaptive Cycling Program during the 2020 season. This funding will enable scholarship-based programming for local children, adults, and veterans with disabilities focused on teaching the skills necessary to safely ride the Jordan River Parkway using adaptive cycling equipment. The Commission's partnership will enable low- to moderate-income students and families to access and enjoy the Jordan River Parkway as a recreational and transportation amenity while gaining the incredible quality of life benefits associated with program engagement.

Founded in 1977, Wasatch Adaptive Sports is guided by our mission to encourage individuals with adaptive needs and their families to realize their potential and engage in active living through year-round recreational, educational, and social programs. The organization focuses on serving the adaptive population living along the Wasatch Front through various recreational opportunities including cycling, which is the organization's largest warm weather program. The innovative scope of services afforded by WAS's Adaptive Cycling Program empowers students to build skills and independence while safely accessing local parks and trails through a variety of program offerings. The organization's entry-level cycling programming centers on providing private instruction to students who are new to adaptive cycling. To be offered 4-5 days a week from July through October during the 2020 season, each 1.5 hour lesson is led by an experienced instructor who guides the given student through a customized teaching progression so that they learn the mechanics of cycling while having fun, increasing strength, developing confidence, gaining independence, and exploring the outdoor spaces for which Utah is renowned. During the 2019 season, WAS introduced weekly group rides for students who have achieved independence in cycling but wish to continue training towards personal goals, such as riding in the Golden Spoke, with the camaraderie and support of the WAS community. For students looking to cycle outside of WAS programming but who cannot afford to purchase the equipment, the organization makes our bikes available for hours to weeks at a time through the Equipment Rental Program. WAS is able to serve individuals with a range of disabilities through Adaptive Cycling Program offerings given the organization's fleet of 70+ highly adaptable cycling devices including bicycles, recumbent trikes, and handcycles. Because Utahns with disabilities are on average lower-income than the general population, lessons, group sessions, and rentals are affordably priced at \$10-20 per day. Need-based scholarships are also widely available across all program offerings and are awarded to over 90% of participants so that finances are never an impediment to cycling engagement. The spectrum of services that WAS now offers allows students to receive the instruction, equipment, and support needed to progress through program opportunities so that eventually they are able to ride independently on their own time.

The surface trails that make up the Jordan River Parkway are vital to the success of the WAS Adaptive Cycling Program. At least two days out of each 5-day program week, lessons and/or group sessions launch from Winchester Park so that students can benefit from the community asset that is the Jordan River Parkway. The extensive length of the corridor's surface trails cater to all of WAS's cycling participants, from those who are able to cycle a few hundred yards to others who enjoy riding 50+ miles at a time. WAS's Murray office is located only one mile from Winchester Park, and

this close proximity not only makes the Jordan River Parkway a favorable location to hold cycling lessons and group sessions, but it also enables students borrowing cycling devices through the Equipment Rental Program to conveniently utilize the Parkway for recreation and/or transportation. Both current students learning to ride and those who achieve independence in cycling can easily access the central location of the Jordan River which is a routinely cited barrier to participation in adaptive recreation, making it an ideal amenity for the community of students and families WAS seeks to serve living along the Wasatch Front.

With the Jordan River Commission's partnership, WAS plans to further bolster the Adaptive Cycling Program during the 2020 season. Over its five-year history, the cycling program has strategically evolved as WAS seeks to best serve the 75,000 people in Salt Lake County living with a disability, the majority of whom require WAS's expertise to not only discover but also maintain an active lifestyle. This impactful program has grown to reach hundreds of individuals annually and continues to see a steady influx of new students. WAS reaches these students through a unique participation pipeline by partnering with local healthcare institutions whose providers enthusiastically refer patients to WAS given the potential to gain the array of health benefits associated with activity. Additionally, more and more support groups, schools, and other community-based organizations are reaching out to WAS with the desire to cycle with the program in order to promote inclusion and wellness. Examples of such groups include Intermountain Medical Center's RAMMP patient mentorship program as well as adaptive PE classes at local schools. As community partnerships flourish and word continues to spread about this life-changing program, demand for the Adaptive Cycling Program continues to steadily increase. The Commission's assistance would directly address this need by funding a portion of scholarship-based program opportunities provided on the Jordan River Parkway. This support would help WAS to accommodate demand while maintaining the high quality and affordable community-based programming which sets WAS apart. WAS projects that the Jordan River Commission's partnership would help the organization to engage 180 unique individuals with disabilities in the 2020 Adaptive Cycling Program, ultimately enabling a wider population of Utahns to access the Jordan River Parkway.

Project Budget

Request Amount: \$5,000

Matching Contribution: \$5,000 from the Forever Young Foundation

Total Project Budget: \$387,650

Project Timeline

While the cycling season typically begins in May each year, WAS has delayed the projected start date for the 2020 Adaptive Cycling Program given social distancing guidelines in alignment with local and national health authorities. The below timeline is subject to change as WAS remains agile to the evolving situation resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

- May-June 2020 – Ongoing virtual instructor training and professional development opportunities
- July 7, 2020 – Launch of 2020 season of the Adaptive Cycling Program; programming to be offered 2-3 times per week on the Jordan River Parkway

- Early September 2020 – All-WAS staff, instructors, and full-time volunteers check in meeting to discuss training needs, safety, outcome measurements, participation, etc.
- October 31, 2020 – Close of 2020 season of the Adaptive Cycling Program
- Early November 2020 – Student Voice meeting for participants and family members to provide input to 2020 cycling season including sharing stories of personal impact and weighing in on program strengths and areas for improvement
- Early November 2020 – Dissemination of survey to all Adaptive Cycling Program students and/or family members to gauge student goals and program impact, strengths, and areas for improvement

Project Narrative

WAS's Adaptive Cycling Program closely aligns with the purposes and goals outlined in the Blueprint Jordan River, most clearly in the areas of Recreation and Tourism. By holding programming on the Jordan River Parkway, WAS helps to promote the river corridor as a regional quality-of-life amenity and recreational destination which is accessible to all including children, adults, and veterans with adaptive needs as well as their extensive support networks and families. Not only do our students and families learn about recreating on the Jordan River Parkway, but as participants gain independence, they are also able to use the surface trails as a north-south transportation route with the help of the Equipment Rental Program or by purchasing their own equipment, oftentimes with the help of governmental or private grant programs. As participation in WAS's Adaptive Cycling Program grows, as does the local adaptive population's awareness of the Jordan River corridor as both a recreational and transportation resource. In recognition of the important role the Jordan River plays for our community, the WAS team has been actively engaged in the Blueprint Jordan River Access and Transportation working group in order to provide an adaptive perspective so that the corridor's ongoing development may further benefit the organization's stakeholders in addition to the general population.

Furthermore, the recreational programming that WAS provides on the Jordan River Parkway directly addresses the Blueprint's goal of providing natural areas and recreational opportunities that inspire personal growth, healthy lifestyles, and a sense of community. WAS's cycling programming offerings on the Jordan River Parkway are a critical tool to help address a number of issues that Utahns with disabilities face. According to the American Community Survey and the CDC, nearly 10% of Utahns have a disability including almost one quarter of the state's adult population. Over half of people with disabilities lead a sedentary lifestyle with only 16% of the state's adaptive population meeting guidelines for physical activity. This lack of activity ultimately predisposes this group to higher risks of obesity, decreased overall health, increased social isolation, and reduced quality of life. Overall, more than 1/3 of Utahns with disabilities report having fair or poor health compared to only 1/15 of those without disabilities. Utahns with disabilities have less disposable income to invest in recreation as they are more than twice as likely to make under \$25,000 a year compared to persons without disabilities. With the Jordan River Commission's partnership, WAS's Adaptive Cycling Program aims to address these alarming statistics head on. Numerous validated studies have found significant associations between participation in adaptive recreation and an array of positive benefits for a person's well-being. Activity for individuals with disabilities can lower the risks of health crises linked to a sedentary lifestyle including BMI, blood pressure, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. Additionally, research suggests that adaptive recreation allows for greater opportunities to be social and build meaningful

relationships and can lead to lower rates of anxiety and depression. Physical activity has also been found to be the leading factor in improving quality of life, life satisfaction, and community integration for the adaptive population. WAS's own evaluation methods reaffirm these findings. Through the 2019 cycling survey, students reported experiencing increased strength (95% of respondents), increased independence in recreation (89%) and day-to-day life (84%), improved self-esteem (92%), increased motivation to be active (95%), and improved quality of life (92%) due to WAS engagement. The Jordan River Commission's support of cycling scholarships for programs offered on the Jordan River Parkway will remove financial barriers to Adaptive Cycling Program engagement, encourage healthy lifestyles, build community, and promote usage of the Parkway for even more Utahns with adaptive needs and their families.



WASATCH
adaptive sports

Adaptive Cycling Program



"THE CYCLING PROGRAM ALLOWED MY WIFE AND I TO DO SOMETHING THAT WE HAVE NOT DONE SINCE MY ACCIDENT WHICH IS TO CYCLE TOGETHER. COMBINE THAT WITH THE FACT THAT PUSHING THE PEDALS ON MY TRIKE WAS THE FIRST TIME I HAD FELT NORMAL SINCE MY INJURY."

- TERRY POPERSZKY, WAS STUDENT

"GETTING BACK ON A BIKE AND SPENDING TIME OUTSIDE WAS LIBERATING FOR ME. I FELT THAT THE INSTRUCTORS/DIRECTORS WERE GENUINELY CONCERNED FOR ME AND MY SITUATION. THEY WENT ABOVE AND BEYOND TO ADAPT A BIKE FOR ME AS MY SITUATION IS VERY UNIQUE. THE STAFF WAS ALWAYS UPBEAT. I BEGAN TO FEEL THAT I COULD PROGRESS IN LIFE REGARDLESS OF MY PHYSICAL PROGRESSION AFTER MY ACCIDENT."

- DANIEL BINGHAM, WAS STUDENT

"OUR EXPERIENCE AT WAS HAS GIVEN MY SON THE ABILITY TO DO THINGS WE COULD HAVE NEVER IMAGINED. NOT ONLY HAS HE PARTICIPATED BUT HE HAS EXCELLED IN EACH OF THE ACTIVITIES HE PARTICIPATED! AS A PARENT IT HAS BEEN A DREAM COME TRUE TO SEE LUCAS RIDE A BIKE, AND GAIN THE CONFIDENCE TO OVERCOME ANY OBSTACLE HE MIGHT ENCOUNTER. WAS IS AN AMAZING PROGRAM AND THE STAFF HAS A TRUE PASSION TO SERVE EVERYONE NO MATTER WHAT THEIR NEEDS MAY BE!"

- LESLIE JENSEN, WAS PARENT



April 17, 2020

Jordan River Commission
P.O. Box 526081
Salt Lake City, UT 84152

Dear Jordan River Commission Governing Board:

I am writing today in support of Wasatch Adaptive Sports (WAS) and the organization's request for the Jordan River Commission to support the 2020 Adaptive Cycling Program. The Forever Young Foundation is pleased to provide matching funds in support of this impactful program during the upcoming season.

As a longtime partner of the organization, I have had the opportunity to watch WAS grow into a thriving nonprofit serving hundreds of children, adults, and veterans with disabilities through thousands of recreational experiences each year. I have seen firsthand the profound impact WAS programming has on these participants including through engagement in the Adaptive Cycling Program. WAS supports students so they are able to enjoy recreation while also building skill and achieving significant health and quality of life outcomes as a result of program engagement. Organizational programming opens up access to activities many individuals and families never imagined were possible and creates new levels of freedom and independence for each student served. On top of it all, WAS provides generous scholarship assistance so that participants are able to reap these benefits without facing the financial burden that often comes with adaptive recreation including the need for highly specialized instruction and equipment. WAS is guided by an experienced and passionate leadership team who are committed to advancing the work of this life-changing organization, both through this coming Adaptive Cycling Program season and in the years to come. Wasatch Adaptive Sports is a tremendous community asset and one truly worthy of the Commission's investment.

The Forever Young Foundation has been a proud partner of WAS's for decades. I invite the Jordan River Commission to join us in support of this influential organization and the incredible work they do in the community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sterling C. Tanner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Sterling Tanner
Executive Director
Forever Young Foundation