



Spinal Connection

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Spinal Connection is an official publication of the Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission. The Commission was established by Act 311 of 1975. On July 1, 2019, the Commission became a public health program under the Arkansas Department of Health as initiated by the Transformation and Efficiencies Act of 2019 (Act 910).

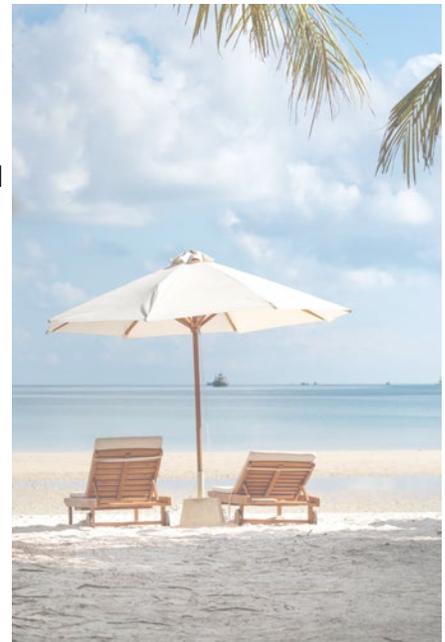
From the Director ~ Terra Patrom

Vacation Readiness

Believe it or not, I recently took a vacation after a 5-year hiatus from not having one. Let's face it, 2 years of that was due to weddings. Then another year of new grandsons being born. Then COVID-19 hit which didn't help anyone in planning any trips period. So, after a 5-year drought, I thought to myself why not share a little reflection on why it is important to get that away time and the planning it entailed.

The goal of planning was to build my understanding of accessibility in that specific destination of travel. I knew it would probably not be to the level of accessibility that it should be.

But this type of planning allowed me to understand what I knew could or would be a feasible level of accessibility for the trip to be satisfactory for me. Everyone should keep in mind that the ADA is set as a standard of bare minimum. So, I knew there would be some not so perfect accessibility feats to come.



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Help & Information
for Arkansans with Spinal
Cord Injury & Healthcare
Providers

Call or Text 9-8-8

The national suicide and mental health crisis lifeline is live.

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1. It is always hard to PLAN any type of trip without doing a little research on accessibility. You always have this in mind as you think about what you want to do while on vacation. It's all about the adventures and making memories. I researched house rentals, restaurants, shopping, dolphin trips, and of course beaches. You would be amazed at how many beaches offer accessible beach chairs for that purpose.
2. COST... OH BOY is there always a cost associated with vacations. So, I thought about extended family that would want to vacation with us. Keep in mind, I know we all have some characters in our families. Cost sharing is a great opportunity to make fixed incomes stretch. Beaches were another free adventure with a small parking fee for the day. Carpooling was a great way to save on parking fees and gas. So, with a little bit of research and planning, I was able to basically build a budget for the trip.
3. PREPARING... You can never over prepare. It is always good to pack extra changes of clothes, charger cords, medications, supplies, sunscreen, snacks, toiletries, and drinks - including a refillable water bottle (saves \$\$\$). Staying hydrated is #1 in the books to fend off a UTI and to keep your bowel habits the same as possible on your vacation. Recheck what you have packed at least 3x before your travel date. I started packing the week before our travel date. Don't wait till the last minute to pack. Inevitably, you will rush and forget something.
4. ENJOY... Your vacation is just that - VACATION! Time to relax and enjoy some R&R. Allow yourself to take a breather from the hustle and bustle of everyday life (your norm). It is a great way to refocus and enjoy simple things - like your 3-year-old grandson riding the perfect wave on a boogie board for the 1st time!

CrossFit Fort Smith

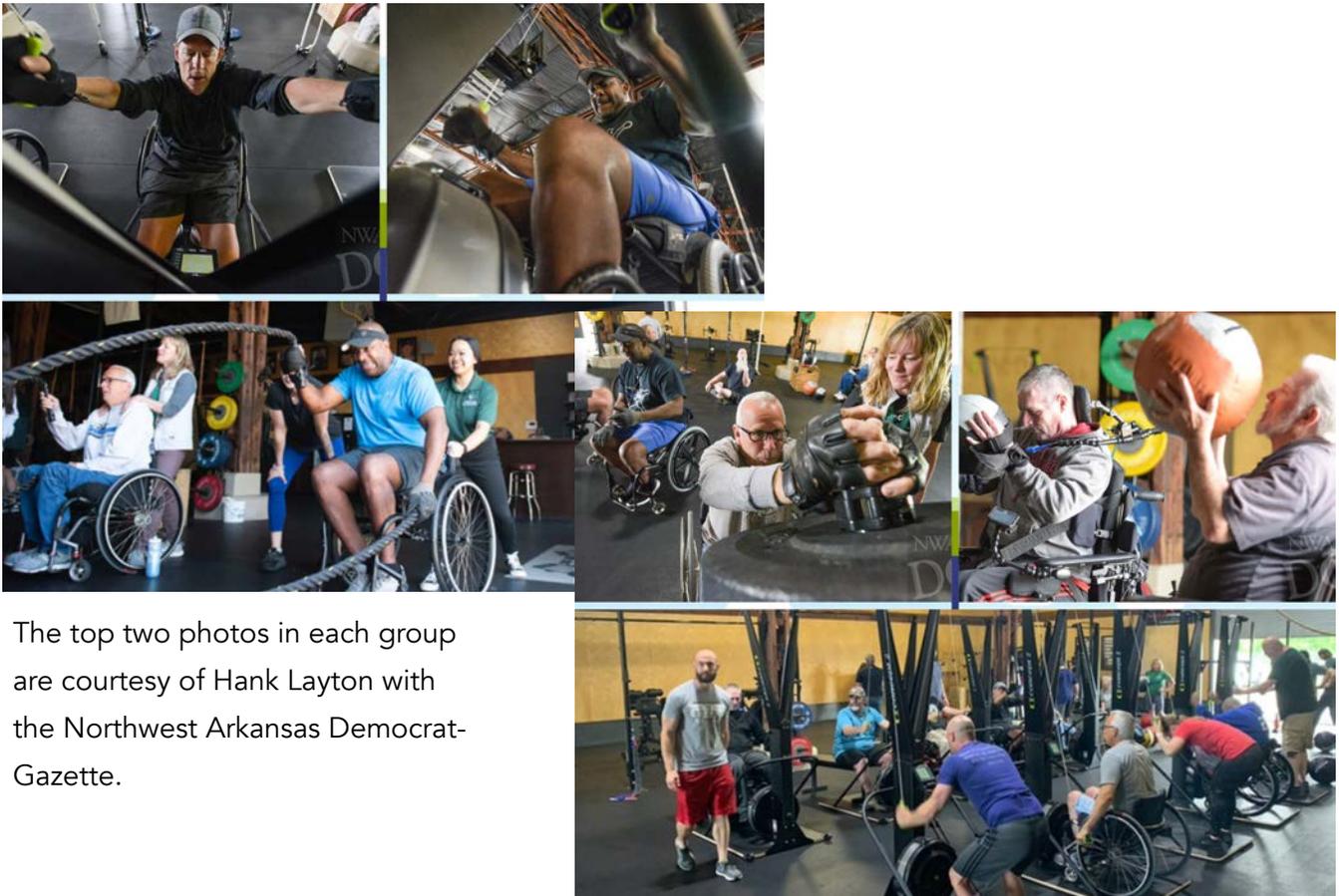
If you have a SCI and are looking to improve your physical health, this free opportunity may be for you. You'll find aerobic, strength, and balance physical activity classes suited to meet your needs.

Classes are run by SHIFT-AR, a group of physical therapists, researchers, movement specialists, fitness enthusiasts, coaches, and students who aim to improve the health of individuals impacted by neurologic diagnoses, diseases, and disorders through exercise. We believe that everyone has the right to burpee.

We offer CrossFit classes led by physical therapists for people with a spinal cord injury and their care partners. The classes have been ongoing for approximately four months with 20 people currently in the class. The CrossFit classes are held on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11:00 AM - 12:15 PM at CrossFit Fort Smith in Fort Smith, Arkansas. Kaci Handlery, Reed Handlery, and Dana Kahl are three physical therapists who assist with adapting CrossFit exercises for all ability levels to ensure everyone is able to participate.

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The program is supported by a grant from the Craig H. Neilsen Foundation.



The top two photos in each group are courtesy of Hank Layton with the Northwest Arkansas Democrat-Gazette.

Planning a Bowel Program

[Article reprint: Fall 2018 edition.]

After a spinal cord injury (SCI) the bowels lose voluntary control, so bowel movements require time, thought, and planning to avoid accidents and to prevent other complications (bowel impactions, autonomic dysreflexia and skin irritation that can result in pressure sores). The bowels are now under the control of your autonomic nervous system and that means several changes must be dealt with: the colonic transit time slows down, and the body's processes for storing and removing stool from the body is no longer under voluntary control.

Normally, when stool moves into the rectum, the anal sphincter contracts and makes the person aware of its presence, so the person can voluntarily contract the anal sphincter until a toilet can be found. At the proper time nerve signals are then sent to relax the anal sphincter and contract abdominal muscles to have a bowel movement. A spinal cord injury slows down peristalsis (an automatic wave like action that propels stool through the gastrointestinal tract), impairs sensation of stool, prevents abdominal muscle control, and prevents control of the rectal sphincter.

Depending on the level of a spinal cord injury, an Upper Motor Neuron (UMN) bowel with spastic bowel or a Lower Motor Neuron (LMN) bowel with flaccid bowel is the result. In an UMN bowel, the goal is to maintain soft firm stools, but in a LMN bowel the goal is hard small stools. In both, the goal is a bowel movement (BM) in a controlled and scheduled manner. In order to avoid accidents, prevent constipation, and improve the quality of life.

In high level SCI resulting in an UMN bowel, spasticity is used to stimulate a bowel movement with digital stimulation or a suppository. In a lower level SCI resulting in a LMN bowel, there is a loss of peristalsis in the descending colon and no anal sphincter tone, so stool often stops there and will not pass unless manually removed, or "heaven forbid", if liquid stool is present it moves freely out of the anal sphincter, as diarrhea. The goal in a LMN bowel is to produce well-formed stools and keep the rectal vault clear by frequent rectal checks and removal of stool.

Bowel programs have several components tailored to the individual: medication, rectal stimulation/evacuation, diet/fluid intake, and activity level. It is important to sit down with your health care



Thomas Kiser, MD

provider and discuss the different options in these areas to maximize the control of the bowels. If you fail to develop a plan to manage your bowels in a proactive, positive manner you are at risk of finding yourself with the chronic complication of an over distended colon, or hospitalization for a bowel impaction or even worse, a pressure sore caused by stool contamination of your skin. Additionally, if your spinal cord injury is T6 or higher, stool in the rectum or any method of rectal stimulation may cause autonomic dysreflexia (AD) and cause a fast, major increase in your blood pressure. To avoid AD, you can use a numbing agent like lidocaine ointment to minimize this painful stimulation or take a blood pressure lowering agent such as nitroglycerin to blunt the rise in blood pressure when doing rectal stimulation.

A bowel program is a plan to regain control of your bowel function after a spinal cord injury. A well-designed bowel program can help you lead a healthier life, prevent bowel accidents, reduce bowel constipation/impactions, avoid skin breakdown and put you back in control of bodily functions. People with a spinal cord injury need to stick to a regular schedule and technique of bowel care.

Upcoming SCI/D Conference

The Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission will hold its biennial spinal cord injury/disability conference on **Friday, October 21, 2022**. The conference will be held at the **Benton Event Center** located at 17322 I-30, Benton, AR 72019.

This year's conference features informative presentations by regional and model system experts, and exhibits from national, regional, and local exhibitors.

This conference will offer exciting presenters speaking on topics relevant to those living with a spinal cord injury or disability as well as every level of healthcare professional.

Registration will open later this Summer. There is **no cost to attend for ASCC clients and one family member or caretaker**. However, clients, family members, or caretakers who wish to receive continuing education credit must pay to register as a healthcare professional.

Our sincere condolences to the friends and family of...

Angela R. Jatko 01/14/21
Lynn Troccoli 05/14/21
Paul Byrd 06/25/21
John H. Leach 08/18/21
Walter G. Hegi Jr. 09/20/21
Joshua Buckelew 10/26/21
Pamela C. Balanger 11/17/21
Gary Benson 11/20/21
Linda S. Jones 12/03/21
John D. Crider 12/25/21
Denise Clifton 01/22/22
Dell Conner 01/28/22
Sean McGinnis 02/03/22
Amanda J. Berstler 03/06/22
Sheldon W. Childers 03/21/22
Marquette E. Muhammad 03/24/22
Fred D. Grimes Jr. 04/07/22
Antonio L. Bridges 04/07/22
Leron Veasey 04/09/22
Daniel Johnson 04/24/22
Laurie Lody 04/29/22
Carl D. Jones 05/07/22
Horace K. Geurin 05/23/22
Marcella Wilson 05/25/22
Gary Kohrs 05/31/22
Sandra Ausbrooks 06/01/22
Sherry Cardell 06/22/22



Spinal Connection (Summer 2022)
Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission
5800 W 10th St, Suite 108
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- ▶ Accessible Parking Laws
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