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# Real Choices in New Haven



Promoting Inclusion of People with Disabilities in Our Community • Summer '06 Publication

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Connecticut  
Spokebenders

## Wheelchair Basketball



Following World War II, as early as 1946, veterans with disabilities formed the sport of Wheelchair Basketball. By 1948 there were six wheelchair basketball teams, all functioning from VA hospitals in their regions. At first, these veterans would play informal “pick-up” games against each other. These games then branched out into the disabled communities across the country after veterans began to leave the hospitals and form teams at local gyms.

Considered the oldest competitive wheelchair team sport, wheelchair basketball continues to be the most popular around the world, spreading across the border to Canada and Britain. The National Wheelchair Basketball Association (NWBA) is the national governing body of the sport. Today, the MSBA governs over 185 teams across the US. The NWBA has grown to include three Men’s Divisions, Women’s, Collegiate and a Junior Division.

Wheelchair basketball rules are slightly modified from the National Collegiate Athletic Association rules. For example, there is a four second lane violation for offensive players instead of the standard three. Players are given classification according to the level of their disability. Players with the greatest amount of mobility are given “class III” classification, while players with the least amount are graded as “class I”. Teams are not allowed to have more that 12 classification points on the court at any one time. Although it is a physically demanding sport, anyone who has a disability that prevents them from playing able-body basketball is eligible to play wheelchair basketball. Disabilities amongst players include spinal cord injuries, multiple sclerosis and amputations.

The oldest wheelchair basketball team in Connecticut is the "CT Spokebenders". When the team was formed in the mid-sixties, they were originally known as the New Haven Spokebenders; the name was changed in the 70's to reflect the statewide participation of its team members.

The team consists of 12 athletes who compete throughout the northeast and is a member of the Northeast Conference of the National Wheelchair Basket Association, which is made of the New England teams. In addition they also play against teams from the Eastern Conference, comprised of teams in the New York City area, and other teams throughout the USA. Annually they participate in the National Tournament which takes place in different cities each year, as well as the Montreal Defi Sportif tournament. The CT Spokebenders have won the gold medal in Division 3 for the past two years. This summer, on August 1, they will perform at halftime of the Connecticut Sun game at the Mohegan Sun Arena.

The Spokebenders are always looking for new players to join the team. For information contact:

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## Gone Fishin'

Summer wouldn't be summer without fishing. Whether you catch and release or take home some good eating, fishing brings us together with our friends, nature and beautiful places. It may be compared to meditation, or fishing may simply remind us that occasionally, time is to be wasted.

A web search reveals lots of information about adaptive fishing equipment including ergonomic rods, rod holders, wrist straps, and reels. Websites where these can be found include;

[www.howelstackle.com](http://www.howelstackle.com), [www.accesstr.com](http://www.accesstr.com), [www.elec-tr-mate.com](http://www.elec-tr-mate.com).

A printed version of the Connecticut Angler's Guide can be found at [www.ct.gov/dep](http://www.ct.gov/dep), obtained anywhere you can purchase a fishing license or by calling (860) 424-FISH (3474). Enjoy your summer.

### **Accessible Fishing Platforms:**

#### **Freshwater**

- Bigelow Pond and Mashapaug Lake Boat Launch - Bigelow Hollow State Park, Union
- Connecticut River - Haddam Meadows State Park, Haddam
- Day Pond State Park, Colchester
- Devils Hopyard State Park, East Haddam
- Pataconk Lake - Pataconk Recreation Area, Cockaponset State Forest, Haddam
- Saltonstall, Lake-Branford AT SCCRWA access area off Hosley Avenue (need permit call 401-2654 for info)
- Schreeder Pond - Chatfield Hollow State Park, Killingworth
- Squantz Pond State Park near the boat launch, New Fairfield
- Stratton Brook State Park, Simsbury

#### **Saltwater**

- Hammonasset Beach State Park, Madison
- Fort Trumbull State Park, New London

(information above can be found on the Department of Environmental Protection website)

Fishing licenses are required for anyone 16 years of age or older. Fishing licenses can be obtained at 200 Orange Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, at the New Haven City Clerks office. Licenses are free for persons 65 years and over, or who meet the definitions below, established by the State of Connecticut.

\*\* Issuance of a free license to the blind or mentally retarded requires proof of disability in the form of a certificate provided by any person licensed to practice medicine in this state.

\*\*\* Any resident with the loss of a limb or the loss of the use of a limb and a doctor's certificate may be issued a free license. Qualified nonresidents who are residents of states which allow the same privileges are also eligible.

