



A Marine Corps ski student who was part of a Wounded Warrior group give the thumbs-up with Jack Cooperman.

Adaptive Sports Takes a Little More Ingenuity This Year

Jack Cooperman has had an additional challenge this year over other years working with Special Athletes on the mountain.

Throwing COVID-19 into the mix has made it especially hard on coming up with the correct formula to make it work. And add to that it was hard for the athletes to not be with their friends. Last year, almost about 30 individuals a day participated in the Rim of the World Special Athletes Foundation summer activities on Lake Arrowhead which included swimming, kayaking, stand-up paddle boarding, pedal boats, water-bikes and plenty of water toys.

Jack recently spoke about the trials and these tribulations to his fellow members of the Mountain Sunrise Rotary Club of lake Arrowhead of which he is the current president. So, Jack set out to find unique and different ways to make it work.

“We did a singular program without any volunteers and only one family at a time,” he said. Some days he would have one family in the morning, another

in the afternoon. Quite often, Cooperman said, both the mother, father and a sibling of the participant would also join in the fun.

“It was hard for them not to see their friends, but it got them closer with their families,” he said.

After doing an abundance of sanitation, questions and temperatures were taken, masks were worn when close proximity was necessary.

The Rim Special Athletes have 14 kayaks, four stand-up paddle boards, two pedal boats and a water bike. “We’re set for next year to take on 50 students at a time if conditions allow it,” Cooperman said.

The purpose of the Foundation, according to its website, “is to provide a recreational experience that is safe and positive for adaptive individuals. It provides year-round activities for adaptive athletes, serving veterans and individuals from our mountain communities and beyond.

In addition to the water activities, the other summer activities have included golf and yoga super-

vised by Kim Meares.

Golf is held one day a week thanks to the Lake Arrowhead Country Club. Yoga, which is an all year program had been taking place at the Lake Arrowhead Community Presbyterian Church has moved to a Zoom platform.

“We’ve had a little over 1,000 participants in yoga lessons, which are given three days a week,” Cooperman said. A couple of people in Northern California and Oregon have logged on as well as members of Disabled Sports Eastern Sierras.

Now Cooperman is focused on how to deal with the adaptive situation this coming winter. Rim Special Athletes has partnered with the Western Division of the Professional Ski Instructors of America and will have eight adaptive instructors Zoom sessions that are going out nationwide every other week.

While stand-up skiers will be able to keep proper social distancing and wear masks, the concerning issue is the sit-down skiers. That will inevitably put instructors close to them, face to face. That “will continue to be worked on”. Working with ages 2 to 89 years old, Jack enjoys it all. The oldest was 89-year-old Carl of Twin Peaks. He can only focus if Jack stays within five to eight feet in front of him, wearing an orange vest. With other visually impaired skiers sometimes the mountain is mentally divided up into lanes and then the instructor lets the skier

know which lane they are in. There is additionally a key word used that means to stop immediately. Other adaptive equipment is available to best work with the participant as needed.

In the past, the Rim Special Athletes have held several “Top of the Mountain” fundraising events at Snow Valley. This year the local event had to be canceled “We’ll be hurting without funding.” Rim Special Athletes has never charged for a lesson and they don’t plan to.

The primary objective of Rim of the World Special Athletes Foundation is to provide a recreational experience that is safe and positive for adaptive individuals. The goal is to have the adaptive athletes have fun, learn a new skill, and develop self-confidence from the experience.

It provides year-round activities for adaptive athletes, serving veterans and individuals from our mountain communities and beyond, says the website.

“Rim Special Athletes are individuals with visual and hearing impairments, amputations, spinal cord injuries, traumatic brain injuries, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Down Syndrome, Autism, as well as many other cognitive and physical disabilities.”

Donations can be made through the website: www.rimspecialathletes.org.

