

FOCUS

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF OTASA

Managing **PAIN**
in **CHILDREN**

Low Vision
GETS A HIGH PROFILE

**ADAPTIVE
SAILING**

Hospital gowns and
SICKNESS
behaviour



VOLUME 3 | 2024

CONTENTS

- 3 Editor's Message
- 4 Making Sense of Sleep Science - *Roxanne Atkinson*
- 9 Managing Pain in Children - *Melissa Vaughan*
- 12 Adaptive Sailing and Canoeing at Rietvlei Dam - *Caroline Rule*
- 15 Challenges faced by Community Service OTs - *Lynn Soulsby*
- 17 Low Vision getting a high Profile - *Jennifer Webster*
- 18 Join us in healing S.A one conversation at a time - *OTGrow*
- 20 Book Review - 'Sibanda and the Black Sparrow Hawk' - *Hester van Biljon*
- 21 Calling all OTs to help drive the licencing process forward - *Ulla Worthmann*
- 22 Writing to Publish - *Helen Buchanan, Hester van Biljon and Sylvia Birkhead*
- 26 NGOT Branch News - Group Therapy Workshop for OTA/Ts - *Njabulo Mnisi*
- 28 Reflections: OTASA Congress 2024 - *Marion Fourie*
- 30 SAJOT News - What makes an outstanding reviewer? - *Hester van Biljon and Blanche Pretorius*
- 32 SAJOT Reviewer of the Year Award - *Pam Gretschel*
- 33 The journey into a new field of practice: Supporting parents of neurodivergent children - *Gina Gush*
- 36 The Neuro Niche - Hospital gowns ... and Sickness Behaviour - *Anupa Singh*
- 39 Dementia Seminar - *Sylvia Birkhead*
- 41 FOCUS on Sonja Smith
- 44 Hope in times of despair for finger amputees - *Media article*
- 46 Student scribes: New Schools of H.O.P E. - The importance of NGOs in Early Childhood Education - *Isabella Botha and Nthabiseng Phalatse*
- 47 Early intervention for ADHD - *Tarien Buys*

12



26



28



33





Adaptive sailing and canoeing at Rietvlei Dam

By Caroline Rule

A person dependent on a wheelchair is limited to artificial surfaces such as tar, paving, cement, tiles, etc. for their mobility due to the challenge of moving around on natural surfaces, for example, grass and beach sand.

This makes the experience of getting out of a wheelchair and into a boat so much more meaningful as it provides an opportunity for a person with a disability to reconnect with a natural environment. It gives freedom of movement where they are limited by their own skills and not by legs that don't work.

For example, Russell Volmer, below (and pictured on the cover of this issue of Focus) who has a C6/7 Spinal Injury, has sailed from Cape to Rio more than once. Using a bit of ingenuity and creativity, he uses the boom to hoist him into the boat from his wheelchair. Once he is in his boat, he is the skipper (the boss of the boat) and with his sailing skills, he can go wherever he wants, even sailing around the world.

I grew up around boats and I love being on the water and I will grab

any opportunity to spend time on the water. Sailing is one of my passions as it must be one of the most therapeutic activities out there. It can range from relaxing and calming to competitive and exhilarating, depending on the wind and the environment and what you choose to make of it. When I discovered the Windrider, which is a small trimaran, very easy to sail, very stable and almost impossible to capsize, I recognised it as being a perfect boat to share my passion with some of my friends in wheelchairs and so I started exploring how we could use it for adaptive sailing. I had the perfect boat, so I just needed the perfect water. Once my children had left home and gone to varsity, and I had more time on my hands, this became my "emptynest-mitigation-project."

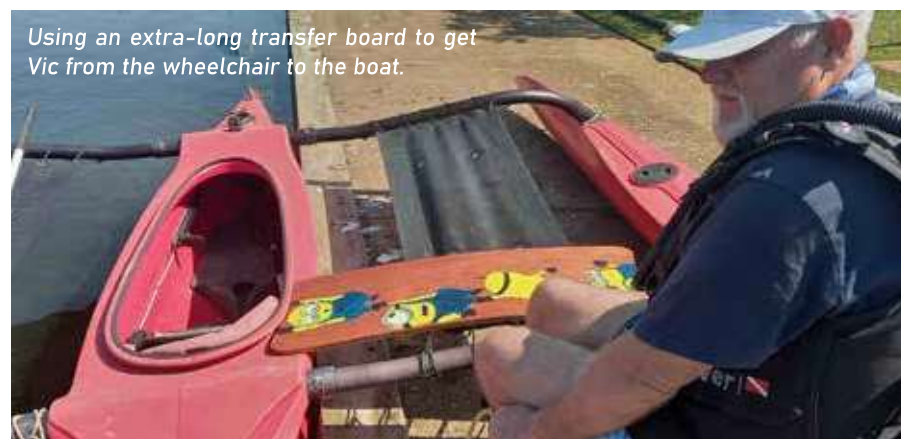
The Pretoria Sailing Club (PSC) and Centurion Canoe Club (CCC) are based at Rietvlei Dam, close to Centurion. It is a small, beautiful dam in a nature reserve. The clubhouse is right next to the water, and although it has a few challenges to make it fully accessible, it is useable with

a bit of effort. The clubs have willingly taken on the challenge to include people with disabilities into their sailing and canoeing programmes and both clubs already have their first signed up members with disabilities.

With each person that comes sailing or canoeing, we work out their specific "fit". I love the challenge of finding a solution according to their individual limitations. The aspects that we need to consider before getting them onto the water include their balance, arm and hand function, ability to transfer and whether they can swim.

It is compulsory to wear a life jacket or Personal Flotation Device (PFD). For a person with limited water experience it is a good idea to first put them in the water with the PFD so that they get the feeling of being in the water and learn how to float, to prevent them from panicking if they fall out.

We have experimented with different boats, access to the boats, balance in the boat, pressure care in the boat and methods of holding



Using an extra-long transfer board to get Vic from the wheelchair to the boat.

paddles, rudders or ropes, depending on the disability of the individual wanting to paddle or sail. I am currently only able to get people into the Windrider that have a strong transfer, but we have a hoist under construction which will soon make it possible to get any level of disability into the boats.



Using a sling on a boom to lift Alwyn into his boat.



Two pairs of strong helping hands to lift Douglas into and out of his boat.



Thandeka and her husband enjoying being on the water

The Windrider uses foot pedals for steering, however we easily created a hand control using PVC pipe that attaches to the rudder, and that is the only adaptation needed for a paraplegic to be able to sail. Limited hand function is more of a challenge that we still need to work on, especially when it comes to managing the "sheets" (sailing term for ropes), but for now we get around that by sharing the steering and sheet management between the skipper and the crew.

The Windrider is a perfect entry level boat but if people want to start getting into competitive sailing there are other options. PSC currently has three Windriders belonging to private individuals, but we are exploring other boats and hope to soon have some alternative club boats that can be used by competitive sailors with disabilities.

On the canoeing side I choose a boat according to the individual's balance. At CCC we currently have access to two adapted boats, both with stabilisers, so the paddler is very unlikely to fall out, and they have back support to assist with their stability in the boat. We use these if they have poor balance or are unable to swim. For people with better balance, we use the club's normal racing boats.

It's all about grading!

A K1 is the most difficult boat to balance, and is a single racing canoe. A K2 is a two-person boat and a K3 takes three people. It works well putting an experienced paddler in a K2 or K3 with a person with a disability as they can help to stabilise the boat. If necessary, it is possible to add extra stabilisation to assist their balance, especially if they are ready to move into a K1. I have a trolley full of different shape and size cushions that I use to stabilise the pelvis in the boat as this is the key to being able to transfer strength through to the paddles.

Transfers in and out have also required some experimentation. When getting from a wheelchair



Transfer stool to assist between the wheelchair and the boat.

into a K2 or similar boat, and the individual has a strong transfer, we use a small transfer stool, so they transfer from the wheelchair onto the stool and then into the boat.

If they struggle with this then we have the option of using two transfer stools, one at the height of the wheelchair, then moving down to the boat height and then into the boat.



Multi-level transfer stools to downgrade the transfer if needed.

The adapted boats are on wheels, which allows them to transfer on dry ground and then get wheeled into the water.

We have even resorted to using a block and tackle with a sling or climbing harness to lift Wayne into the boat and then wheel him into the water.

One of the adapted boats has a dangle which supports the paddle and therefore enables people with ➡



Using a block and tackle to get Wayne into and out of the boat.

no hand function to just be able to push the paddles and possibly pull if we strap their hands to it.

Adri Visser was born without hands, and this enables her to paddle, and she has even started setting herself goals by doing the weekly time-trials at the club.



Adri using the dongle that holds the paddle in position for her so she just needs to guide and push the paddle.

There is a lot of scope for both of these projects to be opened up to accommodate many more people with disabilities, however we need more helping hands, and particularly hands that come with the knowledge and creativity of occupational and physiotherapists.

If any therapists are interested in getting involved in either or both projects at Rietvlei, we would love your input and involvement. Or, if you would like to share ideas in connection with growing a similar project in your own area,

please contact Caroline Rule at: caroline@rollingrehab.co.za.

My life has been enriched since starting this project, I have learned so much from the time I have spent on the water with these people and the joy and special moments that are shared are such a privilege and will always be stored in my heart, and I would love to pass this on to other therapists. ●



Peter surprising me with how well he managed without hands.



Caroline Rule would like to inform all therapists that the assessment service of Rolling Rehab will be closing from the 30th November 2024. If you need a therapist in the Gauteng area for a driving assessment, please go to www.rollingrehab.co.za to find a list of therapists that work in the driving field to whom you can refer.