



Michel Bart- age 50 from Switzerland.
(Blind father of 2)

The *disabled* shouldn't
be handicapped.

FOUNDATION FOR THE DISABLED INTERNATIONAL OPEN AIR SPORTS CENTRE.

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“ I want to *ensure* that any disabled adult or child who wants to *learn an outdoor sport* can do so. ”

Christophe Smith, Director





Rolf Schönenberger - age 36.
(Spastik - uncontrolled movements)



The Background

For 15 years, The Association Vol Libre Pour Tous has been teaching disabled people to paraglide. The exhilaration, confidence and sense of self achievement this has given to over 1500 individuals is life changing. We would like to offer that experience to more people, across a range of disabilities, and a range of sports.

Imagine being wheelchair bound for 10 years, then learning to fly yourself across a mountain valley, or being blind and skiing in the wild on runs for experts? It brings a whole new meaning to 'widening horizons'.

Christophe Smith, Director and founder

Christophe Smith has been teaching outdoor sports for over 25 years. His main passion has always been flying, and in March 1985 he took his first blind student paragliding. It was a revelation. "I suddenly saw how disability needn't be an obstacle to any sport. But I also found, very quickly, that there was absolutely no provision or structures in place to give disabled people the chance to try outdoor sports"

Since that moment Christophe has worked tirelessly for change. He set up the Association Vol Libre Pour Tous. He's designed and built specially adapted equipment, lobbied for change, trained others, spread the word.

To realise the full potential of this vision, to bring freedom, excitement and sporting opportunity to more disabled people, Christophe and his team need help.

The idea: is to create the first International Sports Centre for the disabled

The Offering: the Centre, in Villars-sur-Ollon in the Swiss Alps, will provide professional training in open air sports for disabled people the world over. Alongside able-bodied people and at the same price that able-bodied individuals pay.

The additional costs of adapting equipment, teaching practices and facilities to the needs of each disability will be absorbed by the Centre, which is run as a charitable foundation.

Who will it help?

Amputees, paraplegics, tetraplegics, the partially sighted, the deaf and blind. Both children and adults from around the world. The Centre will also provide a training ground for able-bodied people who want to learn about sports for the disabled.

Activities

The Centre will focus on outdoor sports within natural locations. Up until now these have not been generally accessible to the disabled. We want this to change.

Summer: climbing, diving, water-skiing, wake boarding, sailing, mountain biking, kayaking.

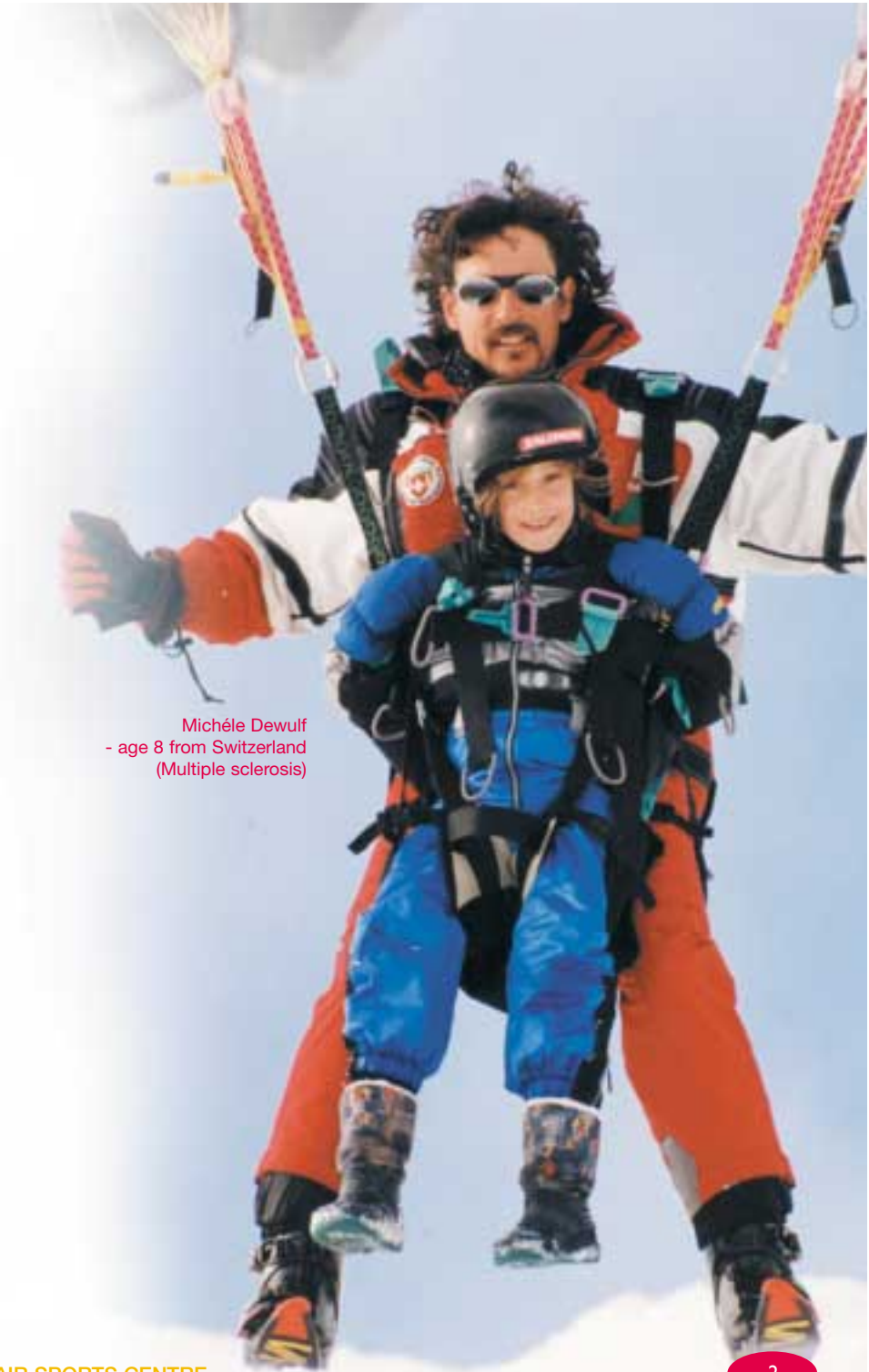
Winter: downhill and cross country skiing, snow shoes, skating, snow-boarding, and paragliding.

Location

The Centre will be located in the Swiss Alps, in the mountain resort of Villars-sur-Ollon (in the Alps of the Canton of Vaud). Villars is one hour's drive from the International Airport in Geneva and 20 minutes from Lake Geneva. Villars provides easy access to all the different activities the Centre will offer.

Language

All teaching will be available in French, English and German



Michèle Dewulf
- age 8 from Switzerland
(Multiple sclerosis)

Near and far

The Centre will be open all year round. Those who have easy access to the centre can receive daily training from qualified instructors in any of the sports offered by the Centre.

Those from further afield can benefit from week long residential courses. We will arrange accommodation, pre-plan the teaching resource and general assistance needed to suit the size and the needs of the group.

In the future, the Centre will provide expeditions to other locations to meet demands for a particular sport or challenge. Recently, for example, we arranged a paragliding expedition to Mount Fuji in Japan.

Initial capacity

Ongoing training. 15 disabled students will be able to attend the Centre each year, to help them become proficient in the sport of their choice.

Residential courses. There will be 10, one week courses a year. This figure will rise as demand and the Centre's funding and capacity increases.

Teaching

The Centre will provide professional teaching in 3 different areas:

- 1) Professional instruction for those wishing to learn a specific sport
- 2) Assistance/ongoing support for those who've achieved a level of competence in any specific sport, but need assistance to practice it
- 3) Training for the trainers to ensure that there is a constant supply of professional instructors and assistants, in a range of sports



François Albin - age 22 from Switzerland
(AIDS patient)



Sopheap - age 21 from Cambodia
(Blind)

The Challenges of Change

As new sports present themselves, we are committed to making them available to disabled individuals who wish to take them up. Similarly, when faced with new disabilities we'll find new ways of making a desired sport available.

This can mean adapting equipment, lobbying for changes in legislation, raising funds and finding ways to charge less. Work in one area will often directly influence results in others. For example, in paragliding, the civil aviation authorities state that participants must land on their feet. But what if you don't have feet, let alone legs? Our solution is to develop equipment that allows paraplegics to land on wheels, then convince the civil aviation authorities to re-think the legislation.

We will also help facilitate change through working with organisations for particular disabilities, and various sports authorities.



Michaël Norton - age 27 from Australia
(Paraplegic)

Structure of the Foundation

The Centre will be run as a foundation, under Swiss law. Three different skill sets will be needed:

- 1) Training and guidance - this sector will involve teaching instructors of each sport how to adapt their teaching practices to suit the needs of particular disabilities.
- 2) Development and innovation - this department will ensure the Centre's operation stays fresh and relevant. Its mission will include designing/adapting equipment appropriate for a particular disability, in any given sport.
- 3) Administration of the Centre (finances, staffing, funding and infrastructure).
Importantly, this department will also help convert plans into practical reality: for example, lobbying for changes in legislation.

All will be available in the long term for consultancy in future centres.

These three disciplines will work together to ensure that:

- **Students** attending the centre can benefit from the highest possible standards of professional instruction and practical experience in each sport.
- **Facilities** and equipment have been adapted to the specific needs of each disability, within each sport offered
- **Legislation** changes have been initiated, where necessary, to ensure individuals will have the right to practice their chosen sport

Staff

Five full time staff will be employed to maintain the Centre's high standards. There will be an equal mix of disabled and able-bodied employees.

Roles

- Three full time trainers to train instructors, in adapting their teaching methods to particular disabilities and to train assistants to accompany the disabled students (once they are confident enough to practice their chosen sport without an instructor).
- One member of staff who is responsible for technical/equipment innovation and developing the Centre's future activities.
- One employee (the first to be hired) to oversee the office administration. This person must be:
 - fluent in languages
 - quick
 - at ease with finances
 - honest
 - solution finding, a facilitator

Longer term goals

Through its pioneering work, the Centre ultimately aims to help establish other permanent Centres, throughout the world. Disabled people everywhere should be able to enjoy learning and practising outdoor sports, as they wish.

Silvana Carpentieri - age 34 from Switzerland
(Paraplegic)





Liliane Mutter - age 36 from Switzerland
(Paraplegic)

Summary of Aims

- 1) To make outdoor sports accessible to disabled people, e.g.:
 - Skiing
 - Water-skiing
 - Speed skiing
 - Whitewater rafting
 - Paragliding
 - Canoeing
- 2) To do so at a cost which is the same as for able-bodied people
- 3) To train qualified professional instructors to teach disabled people (with various disabilities) in their particular sport
- 4) To make qualified instruction available so disabled people can become proficient in their chosen sport
- 5) To train people capable of accompanying and assisting disabled people when they practice their sport
- 6) Once disabled individuals have achieved a level of proficiency, to coordinate and make trained help available to assist them in the pursuit of their sport
- 7) To fight for change in support of disabled people's causes, and to create job opportunities for disabled people in outdoor sports. Currently no structure exists to enable disabled people to become professional sportsmen or instructors. Disabled people end up being deprived of this opportunity
- 8) To research, design and develop equipment to enable the disabled to practice the outdoor sports they wish
- 9) To inspire attitude changes among the relevant authorities (e.g. civil aviation authorities, departments of transportation etc). Where necessary, initiate changes in legislation to allow disabled individuals to practice outdoor sports
- 10) To facilitate disabled people to realise their potential and specific ambitions in any particular outdoor sport



An English school of 21 blind children (aged 11 - 17) and helpers at the ski camp.
Patronised and sponsored by RNIB and Sylvia Addams Charitable Trust.

