

From Joyce Weir :

Caitlin's grandparents had a vacation home at a ski resort in Vermont for many years (they just sold it last year). Every Christmas and February break all of the children and grandchildren would join Grandma and Grandpa at their place for a week of skiing and fun. All of the grandchildren learned to ski there. Many silly stories and happy memories grew out of this shared family experience. Unfortunately, Caitlin wasn't able to be a part of this for many years. While her brother, father, and extended family were having fun together on the slopes, Caitlin and I spent our time waiting in the condo or at the lodge. So, what a thrill it was to discover the Shared Ski Adventures program and realize our family's dream of having Caitlin join us on the ski slopes. Caitlin uses a sit ski which enables her to be upright while being steered down the slope by an instructor tethering the sit ski from behind. Caitlin is able to help steer the ski by leaning into turns as they descend the slope. Caitlin's dad and brother have been volunteer ski instructors in the program for many years. This has had a number of side benefits. Caitlin and her dad get to spend quality time together each Saturday sharing in an activity they love. Caitlin's brother has enjoyed sharing his passion for skiing both with Caitlin and with a number of other students, and has become a stronger skier in the process. We have all enjoyed the camaraderie of the amazing group of dedicated, compassionate, fun-loving volunteers and families that is Shared Ski Adventures. Best of all, we have been able to take Caitlin skiing in Vermont with our extended family. Now, Caitlin can truly share in the family stories of ski adventures in Vermont.

Soccer has been a part of Caitlin's life for many years, but, until recently, only as an observer on the sidelines at her brother's games. We often wished there was some way Caitlin could experience the fun and excitement of playing soccer herself. About three years ago, we learned of a power wheelchair soccer clinic being held at the Al Sigl Center and immediately signed Caitlin up for it, although we could not imagine how it would work. When we arrived, a sturdy plastic guard was attached to the front of Caitlin's wheelchair and off she went to join the other participants in the gym as they buzzed about, trying to hit an oversized soccer ball with their chairs. With a little practice, Caitlin got the hang of hitting the ball and directing it across the gym floor. She was immediately hooked on the sport! Caitlin joined the Rochester Speed Demons team in the fall. The team's first scrimmage was extremely moving for me. There was Caitlin, so often fearful and anxious in new situations, confidently flying up and down the playing field, aggressively pursuing the ball and fearlessly facing off against older, more experienced opponents. I never realized what a spunky kid she was! If not for the competitive sporting experience power soccer provides, we might never have discovered the spitfire hiding inside of Caitlin all these years.

Take care,

Joyce