



# BREAKAWAY 2024

A WSF Sled Rangers Signature Event

It is the mission of the Wheelchair Sports Federation Sled Rangers to provide opportunities to physically disabled youth to increase their independence, self-esteem, and self-confidence through the sport of sled hockey in competitive team play. Our aim is to provide this opportunity to any and all physically disabled children who would like to participate.



# BREAKAWAY 2024



A WSF Sled Rangers Signature Event

March 12, 2024

FOOD • DRINKS • SKATING



# BREAKAWAY 2024

6:00	Welcome
6:30	Drinks / Buffet Dinner
8:00	Presentation
9:00	Evening Concludes

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Welcome to Breakaway 2024!

When we last met 4 years ago, little did we understand about the Covid pandemic that was about to sweep the globe. We gathered in February of 2020, wondering if it was even safe to do so. Indeed, over the next months and years, many lives were lost while doctors and nurses did their best against the unknown; we learned of a new class of heroes who delivered groceries and performed other essential services. And everyone in the world had their entire lives upended.

The Sled Rangers persevered through it all. Our home rink, World Ice Arena in Flushing Meadows, opened in the fall of 2020 and allowed us to continue playing hockey, as long as no more than one parent came with each skater, and everyone wore masks and was vaccinated. And so we did.

All of our tournaments were cancelled, but in a time when it seemed a privilege just to go outside, being able to skate and play hockey was a real treat. We took the opportunity to hone our skills, and our kids got better, stronger, faster. By the time the world returned to normal, and we played in the 2023 Disabled Sled Hockey Festival, I was proud beyond belief to see our kids take home 1st place in the second-highest youth division available.

When Victor Calise and I started this program with my son Sam back in 2012, I had no idea where it would lead, how many people I would be able to reach, how many lives would be changed. So as we gather for our ten-year anniversary since our very first Breakaway event in 2014, I am incredibly proud of the program we have built, and grateful to all of you for helping us along the way.

We have been instrumental in showing kids, parents, and families, what people with physical disabilities are able to do. We increase self-esteem, self-confidence, and independence. And when Sled Ranger athletes walk or wheel into their classrooms as hockey players, it changes how their friends see them, how their parents see them, and how they see themselves.

My own son Sam is now 20. Born with a damaged spinal cord, Sam is a full-time wheelchair user and paralyzed below his waist. He is also a junior at NYU where he studies public policy. I am so proud of not only Sam, but of all of the kinds who have come through our program and have learned important life skills. Please look later in this book to see more about some of our accomplished alumni.

And you have helped to make all this come true with your support and generosity. By being here tonight, you are helping to make this program possible for Sam, our current Sled Rangers, and to any physically disabled kid in the New York City area who wants to try. I hope that when you look around the rink tonight you feel some of the inspiration and pride that I do, feelings that come with the knowledge that YOU are making a direct difference in the lives of so many kids and families. I am humbled and grateful for your support and encouragement. Thank you very much for coming.

*Bill Greenberg*

Bill Greenberg  
Commissioner, WSF Sled Rangers



THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
NEW YORK, NY 10007

March 12, 2024

Dear Friends:

It gives me great pleasure to join the Wheelchair Sports Federation (WSF) New York Sled Rangers as it hosts its Breakaway 2024 fundraiser.

Participating in sports brings joy to millions of New Yorkers year-round and promotes the values of determination, friendly competition, and leadership. Founded in 2012, the WSF New York Sled Rangers program provides vital opportunities for children, teens, and young adults living with physical disabilities to experience the exciting game of ice hockey while also instilling in them the importance of discipline, sportsmanship, and teamwork. I applaud this outstanding organization for its efforts to empower young people and help them build confidence, develop strength, and pursue their goals in the rink and beyond. My Administration is committed to connecting members of our disability community with essential resources that can improve their quality of life, and the WSF is a trusted ally in this mission. Together, we will continue to forge a better, more accessible, and inclusive future for the five boroughs.

On behalf of the City of New York, I applaud all of the Sled Rangers on the ice tonight. Please accept my best wishes for an inspiring evening and further success.

Sincerely,

Eric Adams  
Mayor





Hello All,

Thank you so much for attending the 2024 Breakaway! We are especially grateful to all that have put so much time and energy into making this program a success; Clarissa and Elijah Wong, The Greenberg family, Larry Minei, Sara Tabor, John Hamre and the Wheelchair Sports Federation, The New York Rangers and most importantly, the parents of all the children who participate, because without them we would not have this amazing program.

Sled Hockey has come so far since it was brought here in 1993 by Jon Schatzlein from Minnesota. In those early days the sleds and sticks were entirely different, not the lightweight, bucket sleds and sticks and picks you see today. I first came onto the scene in 1995 just as things started to change and I was fortunate to be a part of the first USA Paralympic Sled Hockey Team that participated in the winter games in Nagano, Japan in 1998. It was one of the best times of my life. What made it so memorable was that the '98 team toured the United States to gain awareness, start programs and educate others about the sport of sled hockey.

After coming back from the games, I knew it would be integral for the US to get more teams around the country and engage disabled kids. I supported Kids programs from New England, New Jersey, Baltimore and Philadelphia but could never get enough traction in NYC, regardless of how hard I tried with the schools and the kids I recruited. It wasn't until Bill Greenberg, and I met that we developed the WSF Sled Rangers and things took off!

From that time on the team has flourished. We not only created a hockey team; we connected kids and families to each other and created a sense of belonging, the kids created bonds, developed social skills, pushed themselves in competition and have gone on to college, law school and are now becoming successful adults with careers and responsibilities. I am happy to say that this year we have had the first player, Sebastian Milan, receive a scholarship to the University of Illinois and I know that he will not be the last!

It was never about winning in sport, although it's nice to win, it was about giving each kid and family an opportunity to engage and shine and establish a community. I am proud of the program we all worked hard to build, and I thank each and every one of you for your generous support to the WSF Sled Rangers!

Ciao,

Victor Calise



Hello All!

Welcome to “Breakaway”, our 5th fundraiser for the Wheelchair Sports Federation (WSF) Sled Rangers. The WSF Sled Rangers are made of boys and girls throughout the NYC area. They are from every neighborhood and are diverse as it comes.

Wheelchair Sports Federation is a national non-profit that provides opportunities for people with physical disabilities to compete in adaptive sports recreationally and competitively. While adaptive sports such as wheelchair basketball have been around since post World War-II, other adaptive sports like sled hockey, wheelchair softball and football are relatively new to the athletic population. WSF is one of the first organizations to provide adaptive athletes with the opportunity to participate in multiple adaptive sports.

Thank you to our sponsors and you for being here to celebrate the abilities of these boys and girls! We hope to see you on the ice soon!

Sincerely,  
  
John Hamre  
President

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**[www.WheelchairSportsFederation.org](http://www.WheelchairSportsFederation.org)**

## A Letter from the New York Rangers

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Dear Friends,

The New York Rangers are pleased to be a sponsor of the Wheelchair Sports Federation Sled Rangers and the “Breakaway 2024” event.

The Rangers organization values our relationship with the Wheelchair Sports Federation and is proud of their accomplishments with both the adult and children’s sled hockey teams. These children with disabilities that reside from all over New York City and surrounding areas are part of the Blueshirts Family and embody everything in an athlete.

We welcome you to the “Breakaway” event, and we thank you for your commitment to these athletes and the sport of sled hockey. Let’s Go Rangers!

Sincerely,



Chris Drury  
President and General Manager  
New York Rangers



## ABOUT SLED HOCKEY

### HISTORY

Sled Hockey, or sledge hockey, as it is referred to outside of the United States, originated in Sweden in 1940 and has been played in Europe since 1971. Canada soon followed the trend and boasts the largest program in the world. It was brought to the United States back in 1989 with the first national team at the time based in Minnesota. Today, there are many established programs, for both children and adults, in most areas throughout the United States.

### EQUIPMENT

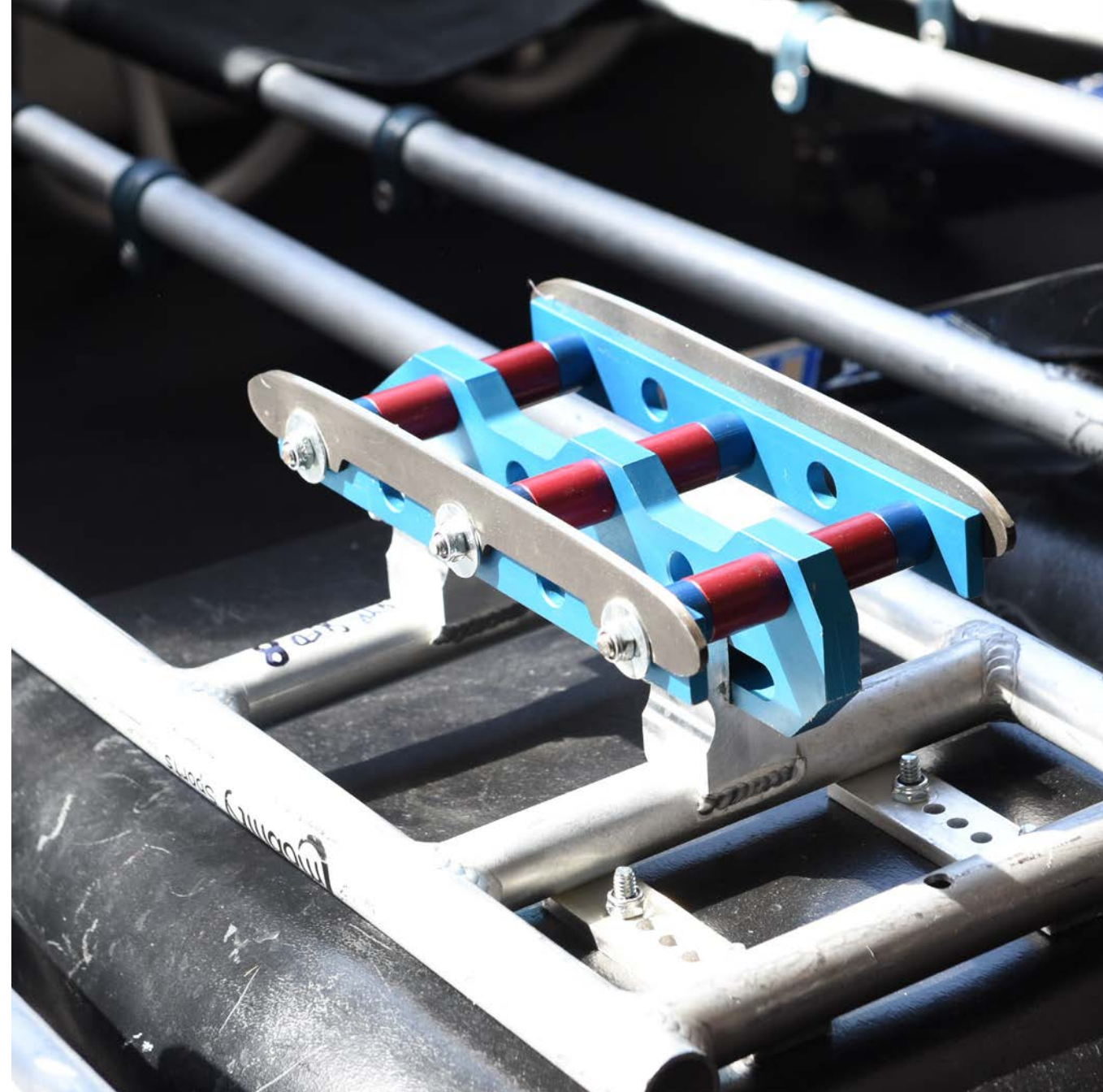
Players use basically the same type of equipment as in “stand-up hockey” with a few exceptions. Players sit in specially designed sleds that sit on top of two hockey skate blades. Each player uses two shortened sticks, and the sticks have metal picks on the butt end to propel the sled across the ice. Movement is achieved by using the metal teeth as a means to grip the ice and push forward. Those players who are not able to push themselves have an additional push-bar attached to the rear of the sled, so that an able-bodied skater can push them from behind. Goalies wear basically the same equipment but do make modifications to the glove. Metal picks are sewn into the backside to allow the goalie to maneuver. In addition, the goalie sled uses plastic “blades” instead of metal to allow the goalie to move laterally as well. At the Paralympic level, the equipment parameters – length of sticks, number of picks, height of sled – are strictly enforced.

### RINKS

Only a few rinks around the country are sled accessible, which requires three main modifications. First, the bench areas should be flush with the ice with no step, so that sled players can remain in their sleds and skate on and off the ice during shift changes. Secondly, the surface area inside the bench areas should be made of plastic or ice to avoid damage to the sleds. Thirdly, the area that is usually plain white boards should be replaced with plexiglass so that players in the bench area can view the action. These modifications don’t cost much money, but they require forethought and planning.

### RULES

All of the same ice hockey rules that have been implemented and enforced in regular ice hockey apply to sled hockey, though there are several additions. Of course, it’s not allowed to hit another player with the pick end of the stick, or to handle the puck with hands. The most important addition is the prohibition against “T-boning” or “teeing”. Teeing is defined as a player making contact with an opponent with any part of the front radius of the sled straight into his or her opponent or from the side. A player who tees an opponent will be assessed a minor or major penalty plus a game misconduct penalty. There are additional rules for the able-bodied skaters who help to push players who cannot push themselves. Pushers can’t skate backwards, can’t screen, can’t advance the puck, can’t jump, and can’t skate faster than the average speed of players on the ice.



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## SPENCER WOLFF Class of 2021

My name is Spencer Wolff, and I was a member of the Sled Rangers from 2012 until 2021. Since “graduating” from the Sled Rangers (and high school the same year), I have attended Davidson College in Davidson, NC. My time at Davidson has been transformational in my life and has become a place that has felt like a second home. I have also recently completed a semester abroad studying in Sydney, Australia, an experience I will never forget. I am lucky to say that both at Davidson and in Sydney, as well as in recent summer experiences in Utah and D.C., I have been able to live independently and I feel that the Sled Rangers had a massive impact on my ability to do so, in the best way.

The Sled Rangers taught me what it means to be a part of a team and work together with others, as well as to surround myself with people who motivated me to be my best self on and off the ice. My best memories have to be traveling with the team to places like Grand Rapids, Michigan, and Minnesota, where the importance of embracing and bonding with those around you was key and pronounced. Also, one of the core parts of the team that was amazing for me was getting to play with my brother, Michael, which I think had a massive impact on both of our lives. This team holds a special place in my heart and life, as I do not believe I would be where I am without the experiences and lessons from my nine years playing on this team.

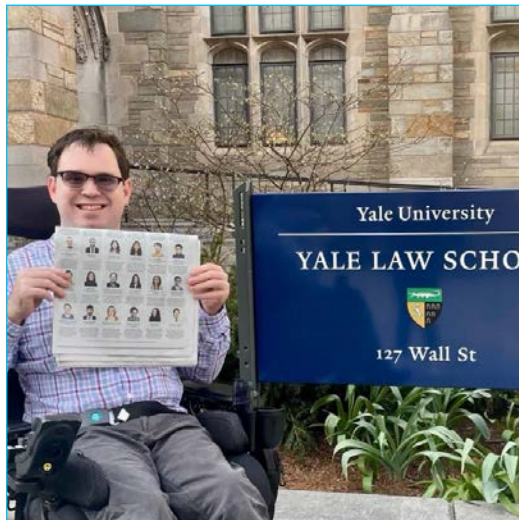


## EDWARD FRIEDMAN Class of 2017

It was not until I joined the Sled Rangers during my junior year of high school that I first met peers with disabilities as well as adult coaches who had jobs, families, and social lives—all with their disabilities at the forefront. Sled hockey gave me the confidence to participate without trying to mask my disability and, in doing so, I learned to embrace my cerebral palsy away from the rink.

Today, I am a JD Candidate in the Class of 2024 at Yale Law School and look forward to returning to New York City full-time after graduating with my law degree next May and passing the Bar Exam

The Sled Rangers also created lifelong memories for my Dad and I and he loved seeing me on the ice in a Rangers jersey playing one of our favorite sports!



## AILIN ZHENG Class of 2021

My favorite memories from the Sled Rangers were traveling to away games/tournaments, bonding with the team, and seeing each other develop as hockey players over the seasons. Sled Rangers was a second family to me.

Since graduating from the Sled Rangers, I'm now studying Nursing at the University of New Hampshire. I am also a member of the Northeast Passage Sled Hockey Team and have competed at the Women's World Challenge since its beginning for the World Team.



## MATTHEW CASTAGNA Class of 2018 (Captain)

I was fortunate enough to captain the Sled Rangers from 2012 through my graduation in 2018. Since graduating from the Sled Rangers, I have graduated from the University of New Hampshire and am a 7th grade social studies teacher in the state. I currently play for Northeast Passage (who were our longtime rivals at Amelia Park) and have recently become the coach of their Junior sled hockey program. My time with the Sled Rangers inspired me to provide the same amazing experiences I had to those in New England.

My fondest memories of my time with the team were made during the Breakaway event in 2016. It was a wonderful night, full of fun, joy and good people. In short, it encapsulated what it meant to be a part of the

Sled Rangers. During that event, Mark Messier came to support and speak to us. Along with that was an interview from Eyewitness News and a few Go-Pros to record from a player's perspective. Wanting to energize the kids, I yelled "Hi" into the camera of one of our younger players. That clip, along with the corresponding interview, appeared on regional TV for all to see. For a few days, I was famous in my town while people reacted to seeing me on their screens at home.

The Sled Rangers provided me with a community of other kids with disabilities to share life experiences with and grow as people. I am proud of the success of all my former teammates and will always be honored to have been a part of the Sled Rangers organization.



## SAM GREENBERG Class of 2022 (Captain)

Being a full-time wheelchair user has always been difficult for me to manage, especially living in a city with few accommodations; I was constantly concerned that I would not be able to live on my own or achieve my dreams. However, after I first started playing sled hockey fourteen years ago, my entire perspective was changed. Even as a young kid, I was able to recognize that playing sled hockey gave me freedom and independence that merely sitting at home could not. By competing not only against other teams but also myself, I was pushed to make the most out of what I had, challenging myself to do more and make the most out of my abilities. This grew outside the ice rink, making me more confident and leading me to go off on my own. I went to school by myself, started socializing with my peers, got involved in my community, and much more.

Now that I have graduated the program, I see that the most impactful part of playing sled hockey was interacting with the other players. Talking with other disabled kids not only about a shared interest but about the problems we faced as people with disabilities showed me that I was not alone. It showed me that I could do things I thought were impossible allowed me to express myself in new ways, leaving me with lasting memories. I know I will never forget the hours-long bus rides to tournaments that were made fun by my teammates, the tricks to navigating New York City I learnt from others, and the ways we as people with disabilities found to keep ourselves active. Without these memories and lessons—without sled hockey—I would not be who I am today.

I hope that more disabled kids and teenagers—especially those that are, like I was, doubtful of their own abilities—are able to go on a similar journey. I hope that through sled hockey, or other adaptive sports, they can acquire the tools to unlock their full potential.





# 2023 DISABLED SLED HOCKEY FESTIVAL

Since our last Breakaway event, many of our older, more experienced players have graduated and moved on to college, leaving big shoes to fill. Additionally, our long time head coach, Roxanne Gaudiel, had to say farewell as she entered a new chapter in her life with a move to sunny Florida. We thank her for the many years of dedication and training. Our team wouldn't be where it is today without her efforts.

Despite all of these major changes, we spent the past few years developing the skills of our younger skaters, welcoming new players, and counting on the remaining veterans to help guide the team. A new head coach, Petey Gianatiempo, stepped in and we began the rebuilding process.

All of their hard work paid off with a thrilling Youth Tier II Championship title at the 2023 Disabled Sled Hockey Festival in St. Louis, MO. The team dominated their first game 7-1, with goals from Max, Sebs, Jorge, Nick and Jake. Game 2 proved to be a tougher battle, but they pulled out a nail-biting overtime shootout win with huge saves by goalie Ryan Piccirillo! Building on their momentum, the team steam-rolled their way through Games 3 and 4 to win the title.

This very first National Championship marks a momentous occasion for the team, as it symbolizes a decade of perseverance, teamwork and unwavering dedication. We are so proud of this team and all they have accomplished!









# SAINT LOUIS ZOO, MISSOURI

Due to a last-minute tournament schedule change, we found ourselves with an unexpected free day before Game 1. The team decided to make the most of this time and explored the fabulous Saint Louis Zoo!

Our zoo adventure included an underwater shark tunnel, fragrant penguin house, an interactive stingray encounter, and sightings of massive mammals - elephants, lions, gorillas, tigers and giraffes.

Although our athletes always prefer being on ice, they had a wonderful experience exploring the attractions of this great city. his zoo trip was a great reminder that we are a team, both on and off the ice, and moments like these strengthen our bond.” Hopefully that will balance it a little better.



## WSF NY SLED RANGER TOURNAMENT TRAVEL

While the Disabled Sled Hockey Festival holds a special place in our hearts, our commitment to competition extends far beyond this prestigious event. Throughout the season, our team strives to participate in 2-3 additional tournaments, constantly pushing ourselves to new heights and expanding our competitive experience.



Two tournaments that consistently mark our calendar are the Griff's Sled Hockey Classic in Grand Rapids, Michigan and the Mighty Penguins Sled Face-Off in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. These events offer opportunities to face diverse competition, test our skills against top teams, and build valuable camaraderie with sled hockey players from across the region.



## WSF SLED RANGERS SIGNATURE EVENT

Aside from tournament play, we enjoy introducing additional sports to the team. For the past two seasons, we have partnered with Mass General Brigham's Spaulding Rehab to embark on a Sled Hockey / Ski weekend in the beautiful mountains of New Hampshire. This unique experience allows our players to trade their sleds for skis and snowboards, venturing down snowy slopes with the guidance of experienced instructors and guides. Whether they choose the stability of bi-skis, the agility of mono-skis, the freedom of adaptive snowboards, or the classic grace of

adaptive skis, each player receives personalized instruction and support, ensuring a safe and exhilarating experience for all.

The Sled Hockey / Ski Weekend goes beyond mere physical activity. It fosters a sense of camaraderie and teamwork as players navigate the challenges and celebrate the triumphs of their winter adventure together. It also provides an opportunity for our athletes to build confidence, explore their potential, and discover a newfound passion for winter sports.



## WSF PARTNER: STAY FOCUSED by Delilah Cox

The WSF Sled Rangers have had a partnership with Stay-Focused since 2016, and Delilah is the 8th student that we have sent to the Cayman Islands to become a certified scuba diver. Roger Muller and Ryan Chalmers run an amazing program teaching physically disabled teens to dive, along with other important life skills like independence, self-confidence, and self-esteem. These are our values as well, and we are proud to be associated with these guys

“One of my favorite experiences was seeing the turtle and various octopi in the clear blue water. I will not forget this experience because it was truly amazing.

In addition to the marine life, the friendships I made and the guidance of the dive instructors made the experience even more fulfilling. The instructors were not only experts in scuba diving but also compassionate individuals who understood the unique needs of each participant. Their encouragement created a positive environment, which allowed us to embrace our differences.

I am truly grateful to the individuals who donate their time and resources to organizations like Stay Focused. I also want to express my appreciation to those who make such empowering experiences possible for people with disabilities.

In my entire life, I would have never dreamed of doing something like this. Organizations like Stay Focused are the reason why disabled kids are able to accomplish extraordinary things”.





# ANNUAL WARRIORS / RANGERS GRUDGE MATCH





We celebrate the success of

# BREAKAWAY 2024

we honor the Wheelchair Sports  
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# Freedom to Achieve

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J.P. Morgan congratulates the New York Sled Rangers and supports the Wheelchair Sports Federation's mission to empower disabled adults and youth through the athleticism of adaptive sports.

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# Hockey Players Have Fire in their Hearts, and Ice in their Veins.



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# Let's go Rangers!

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We salute the Wheelchair Sports Federation for helping to expand the horizons of kids with physical disabilities in New York City.

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Keep conquering your dreams  
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**LET'S GO RANGERS!**

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Some people call it Sled Hockey.  
We just call it Hockey.

We are so proud of all the  
Sled Ranger athletes, and we  
can't wait to see what you will  
accomplish next.

**GO SLED RANGERS!**

William Greenberg and Jennifer Lemberg

## Proud to Support Wheelchair Sports Federation

RBC Capital Markets has a proud history of commitment to organizations that improve the quality of life in the communities in which we live and work. We are pleased to support Wheelchair Sports Federation and salute their mission to provide opportunities for the disabled and wheelchair-bound adults and youth to play sports recreationally and competitively.



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