

Surfs Up! BEAAA features two ability groups

To commemorate Boeing Employees Ability Awareness Association (BEAAA) Heritage Month, on October 19 in Huntington Beach, the Huntington Beach-Anaheim BEAAA Chapter—in conjunction with Boeing Employees Community Fund (ECF) of California—featured two ability organizations: Ocean Healing Group (OHG) and Wheels 2 Water (W2W). The mission of these two groups is to help children and adults with disabilities and to, as the OHG motto says, “Carving the ‘Dis’ out of Disability!”

Barbara Mozley, president of HB-Ana BEAAA welcomed the groups and introduced Carrie Bollwinkle, ECF Executive Director of Boeing California, who explained the power of the pooled fund, the process which enables ECF contributors to provide considerable assistance to needy organizations—making much larger contributions than they could have alone.

She then introduced Larry Benarth, System Test Engineer from Boeing El Segundo, who nominated “Wheels 2 Water” and is an active participant in the program. He played a video which illustrated the benefit of providing access to the ocean (using a customized surfboard and large-tire wheel chairs) for individuals in wheelchairs.

Benarth explained that “Wheels 2 Water” has goals to:

- Get everyone out of their chairs and into the ocean
- Raise money for those who cannot afford physical therapy
- Create awareness of the sport of surfing for EVERYONE, walking or not.

Also present were participants in the program including

Patrick Ivison, who at age two became a quadriplegic after an auto accident. Ivison spoke about the newfound freedom from being able to get out of his wheelchair and experience surfing.

“Surfing has changed my life,” Ivison told the Boeing audience.

“It gives me a way to have control over my abilities and not focus on disabilities of being stuck in a chair. Programs such as Wheels 2 Water and Ocean Healing Group allow me to enjoy the beauty of the ocean and give me some impendence in my life.”

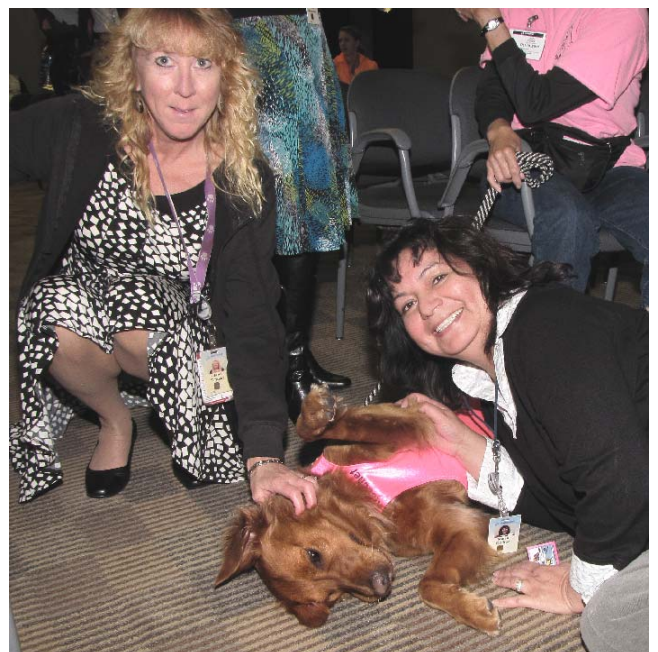
These two organizations rely on many dedicated volunteers to give up their time in order to help adaptive surfers gain the ability to go beyond their own boundaries.

Teal Sherer, who was in a car accident at the age of

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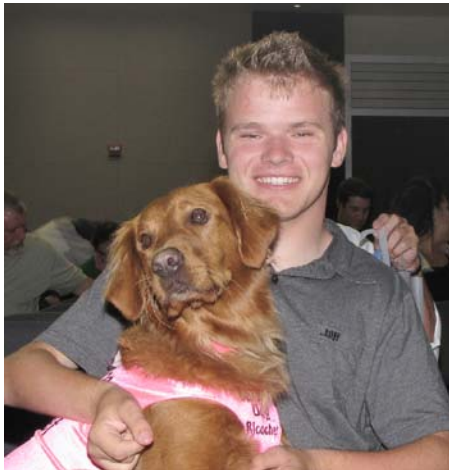
Patrick Ivison and Larry Benarth (right)



Janet Smolar and Maria Collier met with Ricochet after the event

16 and paralyzed from the waist down, said that she has been able to enjoy the freedom of surfing with these two groups. “It has given me so much self-confidence to know I can tackle any obstacle in life—to make the most of any situation.” Sherer is currently working as a stage actress in Hollywood.

Arguably the highlight of the event was Ricochet, the 2 ½-year old Golden Retriever who is an integral part of Wheels 2 Water. A video was played of her life showing how she was raised to be a service dog—going through the training opening cupboards, helping with zippers ... until it was discovered that she couldn't resist chasing birds and, sadly, had to be dropped from the program.



Patrick Ivison and Ricochet

The next scene shows Ricochet balancing on a surfboard in a toddler's pool and the rest, of course, is history. To boost their morale, she uses her incredible talent to either ride on her surfboard next to participants in the ocean or to help them out as a counterbalance—riding tandem on the same board with them.

Ricochet wears a vest describing her as a SURFice dog.



Teal Sherer

Ricochet video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BGODurRfVv4>
OHG: www.oceanhealinggroup.org
OHG video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zb8-KsO7Sxs>
W2W: www.wheels2water.org
W2W video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=amGIwYGHK4M>



Hangin' loose with Ricochet