



Volunteer Kim Smeenk pushes Jennifer Dole toward an activity during the Shared Adventures Day at the Beach on Saturday.

Bill Lovejoy/
Sentinel photos

Play Day

Day on the Beach offers disabled people a chance at outdoor activities

Disabled

7.21.02

By JEANENE HARLICK

Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ

Close to 150 "disabled" people proved a new word is needed to describe people who kayaked, surfed and scuba dived at Cowell Beach Saturday.

Families throughout Northern California came to Santa Cruz for Day on the Beach, hosted by Shared Adventures. The event, in its 10th year, gives people with special needs the chance to participate in sports they otherwise couldn't take part in, including outrigger canoeing.

Participants were aided by a variety of innovative devices, many created just for the event by local inventors.

Plastic chairs with low seats and huge rubber wheels ferried people from activity to activity. A special pulley system with a detachable canvas seat helped get participants in and out of kayaks. Surf-

'It's like a vacation for me to come down here. It's better than Disneyland.'

CONNIE ARNOLD

boards were placed atop a device called a launcher, which looked like a plastic table on wheels, and rolled into the ocean with the rider on top.

Foster Andersen, a paraplegic, started Shared Adventures in 1989 after discovering a void in local outdoor recreation programs for disabled people. The non-profit offers activities throughout the year, including whale watching, Año Nuevo hikes, indoor rock climbing, camping and river rafting.

"It's a great way to get both sides of the community together," he said.

Connie Arnold came all the way from Sacramento to get her annual kayak ride Saturday. Although she's always lived far



Tom Tillman powers Camila Garcia's paddleboard ride Saturday off Cowell Beach.

from Santa Cruz, Arnold hasn't missed Day on the Beach since it started 10 years ago.

"It's like a vacation for me to come down here," she said. "It's better than Disneyland."

Arnold regularly participates in outdoor sports. Later this summer, she's going river rafting and water skiing.

Arnold, who uses a wheelchair, has had

rheumatoid arthritis since she was 6. But she doesn't see herself as having a disability.

"To me, the real disabilities are the architectural, social and attitudinal barriers that exist," she said. "When you come to this event those things fade away."

Contact Jeanene Harlick at jharlick@santa-cruz.com.