

Founder of adaptive sports organization speaks about impact of sports on people with disabilities

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Ashley Thomas was born with spina bifida and uses a wheelchair. She also holds a position on the U.S. national para-kayak team, and founded and runs a successful nonprofit organization called "Bridge II Sports." The North Carolina-based organization develops programs that provide opportunities for children and adults with physical disabilities to play team and individual sports.

Ms. Thomas will be speaking about her experiences at the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) National Conference & Exhibition (NCE) in New Orleans on Friday, Oct. 19.

Bridge II Sports organizes and develops adaptive sports for children and adults coping with multiple types of disabilities. In partnership with community organizations, Bridge II Sports provides the equipment, coaching and game space for a variety of sports, including [wheelchair](#) basketball, tennis, golf, sitting volleyball, adaptive sports for blind athletes, track and field and Paralympic air rifle training. Bridge II Sports is a volunteer-based organization, which charges no fees for participation in its programs.

"It has been a journey, and some of my own life's [experiences](#) are woven into the program and the philosophies," says Ms. Thomas. "As a person who was born with spina bifida, and as a mother of three children (one with dyslexia, one with attention-deficit disorder, and one with high-

functioning autism), there are no accidents, only paths to be discovered building confidence, self-esteem and success. Disability never defines the person. One must own the weakness in order to build the strength."

Provided by American Academy of Pediatrics

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