

LPA Trifecta 2015



Spring Regional | April 23-26 | Phoenix Marriott Mesa

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LPA Trifecta 2015

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News Release

For Immediate Release

Changing Lives of People with Disabilities One Dive at a Time, Cody Unser First Step Foundation at Mesa Little People Conference

MESA, Ariz. April 25, 2015 – At the Phoenix Marriott Mesa this weekend, members of Little People of America (LPA), are gathering for Trifecta 2015, a conference sponsored by western state LPA districts. On Saturday, 20 conference attendees will put on wet suits and SCUBA tanks and plunge into the Marriott pool to “explore new possibilities.”

The dive is part of a seminar put on by The Cody Unser First Step Foundation, a global not-for-profit organization dedicated to raising research funds, public awareness and quality of life for those afflicted with all forms of spinal cord-related paralysis.

Cody Unser, daughter of retired American race car driver and two-time Indianapolis 500 winner Al Unser Jr., and her mom, Shelley, run the organization, supporting its activities through a variety of sources, including connections in the racing industry, corporate sponsorships and other foundations. Cody has used her foundation to join forces with other organizations that benefit the disabled, and is in Mesa this weekend specifically to support the LPA Conference.

Paralyzed at age 12 with Transverse Myelitis, a rare inflammatory disease causing injury to the spinal cord, Cody is a strong advocate of paralysis research and quality-of-life issues.

"I can live with a disability and be okay with it, because I know it's not going to define me," Cody explained. SCUBA diving changed my life in showing what I can do instead of focusing on what I can't. Fifteen years ago we created our SCUBA program which has now led the world to focus more on integration where people with disabilities get to explore the underwater world with their family members and friends. The more you can do to stay active, the better off you're going to be."

The Cody Unser First Step Foundation is conducting promising research with Johns Hopkins University to prove that SCUBA diving has unique therapeutic effects on the minds and bodies of people with spinal-cord-related paralysis (see link below to Dr. Sanjay Gupta's CBS News report on this research). Cody was able to convince her doctors of the therapeutic effects of SCUBA, after the dramatic results of a pilot study were released: on average, the subjects were 10 percent better at sensing light touch and five percent better at feeling pin pricks. Muscle tightness, or spasticity, decreased about 15 percent and motor functioning improved up to 17 percent. Among the five participants with post-traumatic stress disorder, their PTSD symptoms were alleviated by 80 percent, the researchers report.

(More)

tri fecta (trī fektə/):

A run of three wins or grand events. "Today is the trifecta of LPA Regional Conferences"

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"I think the diving community in general, including myself, has known this since we first started donning tanks after Cousteau and others showed us the way," says Julie Sanders, a training executive at the Professional Association of Diving Instructors Worldwide, which is based in Rancho Santo Margarita, Calif., and certified the veterans free of charge. "What is really spectacular now is that, scientifically, we're seeing positive measured health results on those who psychologically and physically could really benefit from it."

While spinal issues are a serious concern to people born with dwarfism, the majority of attendees to the LPA Trifecta 2015 Conference are not paralyzed. No matter what the circumstance, attendees will find that SCUBA diving is an all-encompassing sport that provides a welcoming freedom.

Sandy and Gabe Taylor, husband and wife and members of LPA for more than 30 years, were introduced to Cody, Shelley and The Cody Unser First Step Foundation in 2014 at the No Barriers Summit, a conference described as "*Part inspiration, part action, an unparalleled four-day conference empowering people to break through barriers, find their inner purpose and contribute their very best to the world.*"

"All of these organizations share many of the same goals," explained Sandy. "They promote pride, independence and the importance of getting out there and making a difference."

The LPA Trifecta 2015 Conference offers a diverse array of 18 educational sessions, a blue ribbon medical panel from Cedar Sinai and Johns Hopkins, and plenty of social networking with eight receptions, two dances and a poker tournament. Athletics competition is hugely popular at LPA events, and Trifecta 2015 features a keynote by the Arizona Diamondbacks, an offsite event at an Arizona Diamondbacks game, and Bocce, Soccer & Softball Games. The LPA Trifecta 2015 Conference runs Thursday through Sunday.

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Scientists from Johns Hopkins University are working to prove: that scuba diving has unique therapeutic effects on the minds and bodies of people with spinal-cord-related paralysis. Click on the graphic on left to watch Dr. Sanjay Gupta's CBS News report on this research.

[Click graphic to watch video](#)

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About Little People of America, Inc. (LPA)

lpaonline.org

Little People of America, Inc., is a national nonprofit organization that provides support and information to people of short stature and their families. Short stature is generally caused by one of the more than 200 medical conditions known as dwarfism. LPA has more than 6000 members across the United States and internationally, with 13 districts and 70 chapters. LPA provides social interaction, parent and peer support, medical support and education, scholarships and grants. Our members range from newborns to senior citizens, little people and average height. Dwarfism cuts across all religions, ethnicities, and economic levels.

About The Cody Unser First Step Foundation (CUSF)

cufsf.org

The Cody Unser First Step Foundation is a global not-for-profit organization dedicated to raising research funds, public awareness and quality of life for those afflicted with all forms of spinal cord-related paralysis. The Foundation will also address the cause, rehabilitation, prevention and cure for Transverse Myelitis, and freely affiliate with other medical, charitable and corporate entities to achieve these goals.

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