



In 2021 STARS was awarded a grant of \$66,000 from the [Craig H. Neilsen Foundation](#) to provide a number of camps for people with spinal cord injury during the summers of 2022 and 2023. The first of four camps occurred last summer with an open enrollment “Adult Wellness Retreat” hosting 10 participants who experienced biking, horsemanship and kayaking – all who came to us individually and not part of an organized group. While this camp ran smoothly it paled in comparison to what we provided July 30-August 3rd to a group of 10 wheelchair users, staff and caregivers from the [Spaulding Rehabilitation Center](#) in Boston, MA.

To say it was magical is an understatement and it proves how months of thoughtful pre-planning, the expertise and professionalism provided by our incredible team, perfect weather, the return of adaptive waterskiing to the itinerary (thanks Ed Macarthur!) and more – a recipe for a WIN and arguably an 11 out of 10 on a camp informal rating scale! The group was flown in from Logan Airport via Denver into Hayden on Southwest Airlines where participants enjoyed complimentary roundtrip travel vouchers donated to STARS as part of a continuing partnership with the airlines. We kicked things off with our Sunday Welcome BBQ on the STARS Ranch patio before everyone settled into their lodge rooms after a long day of travel. On Monday the group tried out mountain biking, went to Old Town Hot Springs and then enjoyed a wonderful meal prepared by new food purveyors [La Central Catering](#) followed by the movie “[Crip Camp](#)”. On Tuesday the group spent the day at Bald Eagle Lake with a picnic lunch and some epic waterskiing fun and then on Wednesday they all went to Zen Ranch where 9 out of 10 participants got up on a horse and rode around the arena – resulting in the best quote of the day: “It’s like I had working legs again...but 4 of them!” The busy week culminated with pizzas and brews at [Mountain Tap](#) and go to see Yer State Birds play a free concert at [Snow Bowl Steamboat](#).

On the last morning we all circled up for a debrief session before the group left for the airport. Everyone including participants, caregivers, staff and interns took part in this emotional farewell where each person shared their mountain highs, valley lows and what they will take downstream on the river of life as they reflected on their time with STARS. There were lots of joyful tears and amazing stories about how empowering and impactful the week was and how each and every person plans to expand their horizons and take part in adaptive sports because of what STARS has either introduced them to or reinvigorated in them! We now look forward to hosting two more SCI camps this summer:

- Neilsen SCI Camp from Shephard Rehab Center in Georgia: Sun 8/27-Thurs 8/31
- Neilsen SCI Camp (open enrollment): Sun 9/10- Thurs 9/14