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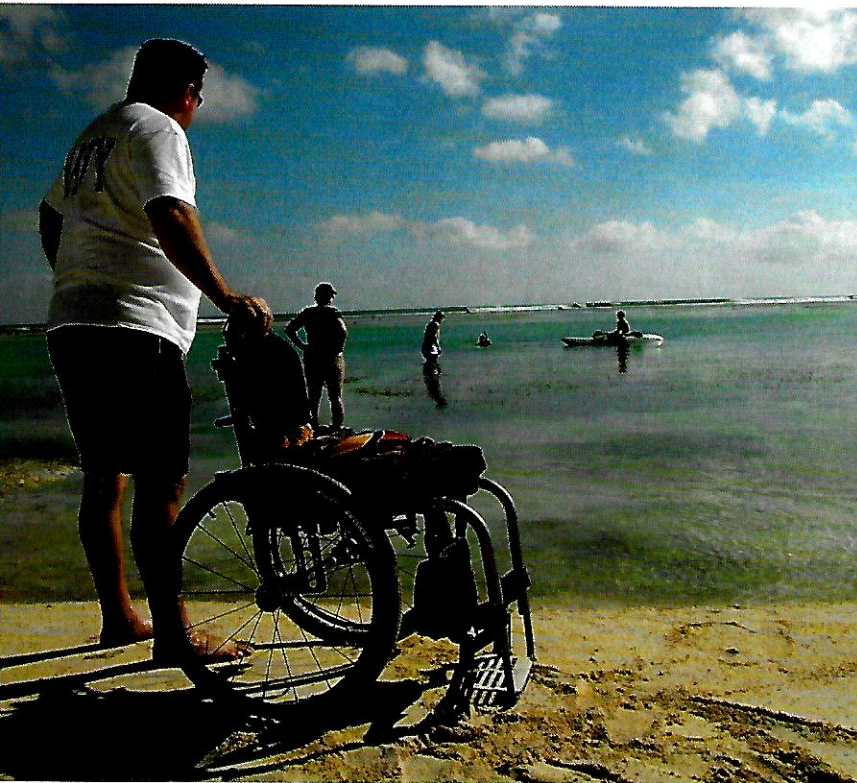


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# It's Okay to Sell to Physically Challenged Divers

## PADI Course Director turns his passion for helping others into profit for his dive center

by Scott D. Jones



**A**sk Scott Taylor about an area in the dive industry with exceptional growth potential and he won't hesitate to tell you – it's physically challenged divers. The PADI Course Director and co-owner of A-1 Scuba and Travel Center, located just outside of Denver, Colorado, USA, is passionate about this market and isn't shy about talking about it, either.

"The dive industry needs to know that this demographic group may not be the largest or most glamorous, but it's out there waiting for forward-thinking dive centers to go after. For some reason, the dive industry is skeptical or, in some cases, simply ignores the

physically challenged. It doesn't have to be that way," Taylor points out.

For years, A-1 Scuba has offered programs ranging from Discover Scuba Diving experiences and individual Open Water Diver courses to group trips to popular dive destinations around the world. Earlier this year, working in conjunction with Craig Hospital, a local facility specializing in spinal cord and head injuries, A-1 Scuba and Travel took a group of physically challenged divers to the Divi Tiara Beach Resort on Cayman Brac to complete their PADI Open Water Diver course and to enjoy the tropical waters surrounding this island paradise.

The 18 participants, each with varying degrees of physical challenges, included a government official, a small business owner and a retired school-teacher. All had their stories to tell and experiences to share, and all gladly invested in new equipment and accessories to make the trip easier and more enjoyable.

Taylor, along with wife Lynn, led the trip, which also included three extra instructors and three assistant instructors. A local CBS television crew who documented and reported the trip for the Denver-area viewers accompanied the group as well.

In addition, A-1 Scuba held practice sessions prior to departure so everyone was comfortable with the techniques and procedures. Once at the resort, each diver dived with at least one assistant. But, other than a few extra precautions, the trip was like any other.

Of course, not every resort (or even dive center) is set up to handle the special needs of physically challenged divers. "Thankfully, Divi Tiara Beach was not only prepared to work with our group, but went out of its way to make us feel welcome. That makes a big difference in planning and implementing a successful trip," said Taylor.



Taylor, a registered physical therapist, feels fortunate to have found a way to combine his former career with his current one. While working at Craig Hospital years ago, he met Carol Huserik (a PADI Assistant Instructor) and together the two have put physically challenged divers into the pool every month for the last 10 years.

A-1 Scuba worked with Craig Hospital to install a lift in its swimming pool to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act so that customers in wheelchairs could move around the store and training areas comfortably. Taylor actively promotes diving to this audience. "Water is the great equalizer. People who aren't able to do things on land are suddenly active once they get in the water."



The relatively few dive centers currently offering programs to the physically challenged know the rewards, both emotional and financial. There is without question a sense of pride and accomplishment when one of these students completes the PADI Open Water Diver course. Physically challenged students who might not meet all the PADI Standards for certification are usually able to meet the qualifications set forth by the Handicapped Scuba Association (HSA), so virtually anyone who wants to learn to dive can, according to instructors for both PADI and HSA.



"It's surprising that more dive centers don't consider this market," Taylor says. "Inside, physically challenged people are no different from anyone else. They want the same things, the same experiences as the rest of us – and they are willing to pay for them. Sure it takes a little extra effort, but in the end, these customers are happy to cover the required costs just like any other customer."

Taylor doesn't have an answer to the industry's reluctance to go after this market. "I'm happy to give back to those in need, and I'm also a businessman. The dive industry needs to realize that it's okay to market to physically challenged divers and earn a fair return for their work and investment."

"But, if others don't want to teach physically challenged people to scuba dive, that's their loss as a business, not a loss for those customers. They'll be fine because I – and others like me – are ready, willing and able to take them diving," he concludes. ♦



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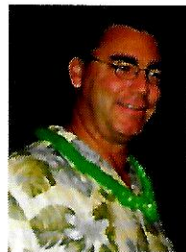
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**Steve Schultz** [MSDT-42464] claims to be more stressed out than a caffeine-addicted Chihuahua when he isn't diving. After becoming an instructor in 1990, Schultz became convinced that stress was a major factor behind new diver dropouts. As a result, he created Mind, Body and Spirit Scuba to promote enjoyment of scuba and, quite simply, to help people relax. Schultz is from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA and is open to new opportunities to share his program. PADI Members can reach him by email at [mbsdiver@mindspring.com](mailto:mbsdiver@mindspring.com) or by phone at +1 717 940 3036.