

Toronto International Boat Show 2005

At last years show Toromont CAT generously allowed us to share its booth. This year we got to share "The Lake"!

And, we even got into the Official Boat Show Guide - see below:

The pleasures and rewards of boating shouldn't be reserved strictly for the physically able. That's the message the Boat Show and not-for-profit organization, CharterAbility hope to convey. There are more than two million disabled people in Ontario. You may know someone confined to a wheelchair who would be eager to get out for a pleasant day on the water in a boat built to accommodate his or her special needs.

The Boat Show and its star attraction, The Lake, are fully accessible to the mobility impaired. The Lake's EZ Dock floating dock system is "American with Disabilities Act" compliant, and is extremely stable so those in wheelchairs can get out on the docks, view the interior of boats and even come aboard CharterAbility's floating pontoon boat.



Making boating accessible to the mobility impaired is a dream for quadriplegic, Stephen Cull, who founded CharterAbility. Comprised entirely of volunteers CharterAbility is at the Show to build awareness and raise funds to manufacture a 60-foot barrier-free, fully accessible charter boat for Lake Ontario.

When finished, the catamaran style boat will carry up to 50 passengers - allowing groups of mobility challenged people to "roll aboard" with family members and friends so they too can enjoy on-water activities such as cruising, fishing, photography, bird watching, parties or picnics in safe and comfortable surroundings.

"We want to put smiles on people's faces," says Stephen Cull, "and boating does just that. Offering a barrier free boating experience can enrich the lives of people of all ages with disabilities or mobility impairments."

To learn more about how CharterAbility is breaking down barriers to boating, look for the wheelchair hanging from the rafters at The Lake. Below it sits Stephen Cull's personal pontoon boat...acting as a seed for an ambitious project that will bring barrier free, fully accessible boating to groups on the Toronto waterfront. For more information visit www.charterability.com

We are immensely grateful to Linda Waddell, Show Manager for the National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA), and her crew for making our appearance in The Lake possible.

Also for giving us a prime location right next door to the eatery, and for their efforts in raising our symbolic wheelchair to the rafters!

The wheelchair proved to be a "bit of a saga." We assumed that it would be put into place at the same time as the boat. But we were wrong by six days! So, we had just 24-hours to pull it all together, time to panic!

But, as the picture shows, it all got done - thanks to Sunrise Medical who came up with their latest titanium wheelchair, Art Lee Men's Wear who came up with a mannequin (suitably attired), Salus Marine Wear who came up with life vests (embroidered with the CharterAbility logo), The Original Sign Shoppe who printed the trim for the wheels - and the crew from the Boat Show who collected everything despite the blizzard!



All-in-all an amazing effort by a wonderful group of people to whom we extend our appreciation and gratitude – not to mention the 24 CharterAbility volunteers who came along to help out (*and you know who you are!*):

Art Lee Jr. for the mannequin and "togs"	Art Lee Men's Wear
Bill Hutchings for the logos (on the boat and wheelchair)	The Original Sign Shoppe
Bill Milne for the hanging wheelchair idea (and the anchors)	Alex Milne & Associates
Chad Dailey & Family for the docking system and ongoing support	EZ Dock Ontario
Dave Tullis & Family for the ramp on the pontoon boat	Industrial Machine Service
Jennifer Morrison for the Quickie "Titanium" wheelchair	Sunrise Medical
Joe Allen for the wheelchair tie downs	Kino Mobility Inc.
Linda Crane for the write-up in the Show Guide and media alert	Crane Communications
Linda Waddell for letting us in to the Boat Shows	National Marine Manufacturers Association
Michael Edwards for the rescue sling	Inland Liferrafts & Marine Ltd.
Paul Cummings for trucking the boat everywhere	Co-owner of the pontoon boat
Steve Wagner for the embroidered life vests	Salus Marine Wear Inc.
The Boat Show Crew for all their help ... and understanding	National Marine Manufacturers Association