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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Athletes Experience Freedom on the River at the All-Adaptive BAYADA Regatta *31st annual competitive event showcases skills of athletes with disabilities*

MOUNT LAUREL, NJ – August 1, 2012 – When Terri Kubiak of southwest Philadelphia was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS) 15 years ago, she thought her athletic days were over, even though she was just 30 years old. But after discovering adaptive sports, including rowing in the BAYADA Regatta, she has a new lease on life.

Now in its 31st year, the BAYADA Regatta is the oldest and largest all-adaptive regatta in the country. It will take place on the Schuylkill River on Saturday, August 18 from 8 am to 4 pm at St. Joseph's University Boathouse, 2200 Kelly Drive in Philadelphia. Participants from more than 10 national rowing clubs, who are classified according to their physical, visual, or intellectual impairment, compete in events for novice, veteran, and youth rowers. The BAYADA Regatta is hosted by Philadelphia Adaptive Rowing (PAR), part of the Philadelphia Center for Adapted Sports. PAR provides recreational and competitive rowing opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

"I used to do all kinds of sports, and I didn't even dream that I could continue once I was diagnosed," Kubiak said. This will be the fourth year in which she has participated in the BAYADA Regatta. Due to MS, she has problems with balance, so PAR provides pontoons on each side of the boat to help balance the boat, enabling her to row.

"It's great to see others like me and know that we can row because of the kindness of the volunteers," she said. "I feel blessed to be able to participate in the BAYADA Regatta."

James Falls, a Plymouth Meeting, PA resident, has attended the regatta as either a participant or volunteer since 1983, after losing a leg in an accident. "I was in awe when I first experienced the regatta, and it changed my life," he said. "I realized there is life after a disability."

During the year, PAR's more than 120 volunteers work with the participants to help them prepare for the regatta, and many also assist with the events on race day. Loretta Cohen of West Chester, PA has worked with PAR for 12 years and is now a PAR program coordinator. Each Wednesday evening, she and a group of volunteers carry the boats into the water, help the rowers into the boats, equip the boats for each rower's needs, and more. "We focus on the sport, on the rowing," she said. "The disability is secondary."

Cohen said the BAYADA Regatta is the highlight of the year for rowers and volunteers alike. "It's a chance for rowers with disabilities from around the country to demonstrate their athletic accomplishments—it's phenomenal."

Peter Lalli of Eagleville, PA began volunteering with PAR after his brother, who suffered life-threatening injuries in an Army helicopter accident, began participating in adaptive sports.

“The regatta helps the athletes feel like everyone else. They push their limits, just as we push our own,” he said. “It gives them an amazing sense of satisfaction, and it makes such a difference in their lives. I love every minute of it.”

“You feel strong when you’re out there on the river,” Kubiak said. “It’s a good feeling—whether you’re adaptive or not.”

The BAYADA Regatta, sponsored solely by BAYADA Home Health Care, is free and open to the public. Medals will be awarded to the athletes throughout the day. Music, crafts, and refreshments will be provided. Visit www.bayada.com/regatta for more information.

Founded in 1975 by J. Mark Baiada, BAYADA Home Health Care provides nursing, rehabilitative, therapeutic, hospice, and assistive care services to children, adults, and seniors in the comfort of their homes. Headquartered in suburban Philadelphia, BAYADA employs more than 18,000 nurses, home health aides, therapists, medical social workers, and other home health care professionals who serve their communities in 25 states from more than 250 offices.

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