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BORP (Bay Area Outreach & Recreation Program) Announces New Executive Director

BORP taps Emily Seelenfreund, accomplished disability rights advocate with significant adaptive recreation experience, to serve as next Executive Director

May 10, 2023 — (Berkeley, CA) It is with great excitement that Bay Area Outreach and Recreation Program (BORP) announces its new Executive Director, Emily Seelenfreund. Emily knows BORP well, as a participant in our adaptive cycling and wheelchair basketball programs, and as a board member for the last year. Moreover, Emily has firsthand experience in developing and leading adaptive recreation programs from the ground up. She co-founded ParaCliffHangers in 2019, a nonprofit focused on adaptive climbing. She was recently awarded a [2022 Climbing Advocate Award](#) from the Access Fund for her work increasing indoor and outdoor climbing opportunities for individuals with all types of disabilities.

Previously Emily worked for the City of Oakland as their Programmatic Access Coordinator and for Disability Rights Advocates (DRA) as an attorney litigating cases protecting the rights of people with disabilities nationwide. During her tenure at DRA, she spearheaded [legal challenges to a segregated school network in Staten Island](#) and the failure of several major [podcast producers to ensure accessibility for deaf consumers](#). She was also a principal contributor to a groundbreaking [settlement that will ensure the New York City subway is fully accessible](#) within the next 30 years.

Emily received her bachelor's degree from the University of Alabama, where she played collegiate wheelchair basketball, and her JD from Harvard Law School.

"I am incredibly honored to serve as BORP's next executive director. I have participated in adaptive sports and recreation since I was five. I know firsthand that alongside athletics, BORP's programming provides critical community, self-esteem, and independence to its many participants."

"Every person with a disability, no matter the severity of their disability, their race, or socioeconomic status deserves equitable access to those same inclusive activities. I can't wait to get to work, alongside BORP's deeply committed staff and board, to build and expand on these opportunities across the Bay Area."



BORP Executive Director Rick Smith is stepping down after leading the organization for 11 years. Reflecting on this moment in the organization's nearly 50 years, he says:

"We've emerged from the pandemic in pretty good shape financially and programmatically. We were even able to add new programs like kayaking and wheelchair rugby. At the same time, it's a new world since the pandemic. Communications are changing. Communities are changing. Recreation is changing. Just about the only thing unchanged is the need to get outdoors, get physical exercise, and connect with people. Emily is exactly who BORP needs to bring BORP into the future. I couldn't be more delighted with her selection."

BORP's Board President Steve Lau, a Clinical Social Worker at Alta Bates Summit Medical Center–Inpatient Acute Rehabilitation, had this to say:

"Emily has been a huge asset to the Board of Directors and has fought for the rights of individuals with disabilities in a variety of contexts throughout her career. Everyone needs to be able to set themselves a challenge and overcome that challenge. I see it all the time in my role as a medical social worker for an acute rehabilitation facility and for individuals with disabilities it can be especially hard to find a place to do that. BORP programs create that opportunity as well as a sense of community of peers. Emily knows first hand just how powerful and life-changing such an opportunity can be. We on the Board could not be more excited to see where Emily takes this venerable and always adapting organization."

Emily will begin in her new role at BORP on June 1st. A full bio is available [here](#). She is available for interviews on May 12 and May 15, 2023. Please contact communications@borp.org to set up an interview.

ABOUT BORP

BORP's mission is to improve the health, independence & social integration of children, youth and adults with physical disabilities and visual impairments through sports, fitness, and recreation programs. With a staff of eight fulltime and 12 part time employees, and robust volunteer and community support built through nearly five decades of community-responsive programming, BORP is the only organization in the San Francisco Bay Area providing such comprehensive recreation programming for people with disabilities.

BORP's programs include: 1) Fitness programming that includes 4 in-person and 9 virtual classes five days a week; 2) adult & youth team sports including: Wheelchair Basketball, Power Soccer, Goalball, Quad Rugby, and Sled Hockey; 3) Adaptive Cycling and Adaptive Kayaking at our Cycling Center on Berkeley's waterfront, contiguous with the East Bay's



extensive network of bike trails; 4) Adventures & Outings programming that offers trips to trails, parks & festivals, adaptive climbing, and overnight camping; 5) the Access Northern California website (www.accessnca.org) that provides detailed access information about regional park hiking trails and other recreational destinations; and 6) our Transportation Program, providing free wheelchair-accessible paratransit to our programs and other area organizations serving the community.

For more information, visit www.borp.org

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