

On behalf of Gem City Crew, we need your help in bringing awareness to youth Para-rowing opportunities and identifying and engaging with middle school and high school students that are potential para-athletes.

Gem City Crew’s mission is to encourage youth rowing performance, which includes adaptive- or para-athletes. Gem City Crew is one of the leaders in the United States for supporting youth para-athletes. One of our coaches, Elizabeth McNutt, is also a classified para-athlete. We currently have two para-athletes on our team, one of which, Lilian Rodriguez, holds multiple rowing world records. Here is Lili’s experience with rowing and our team in her own words:

*“Rowing is sort of like an escape and opportunity to me, it opened a lot of doors for me. After all my surgeries and treatment, I wasn’t very active in sports because I didn’t think I could participate. When I was introduced to rowing, my mental and physical health changed dramatically. I felt more involved, stronger, and happier. Even though it took some time to actually figure out what worked best for me, I felt like I was willing to have the patience because this was something I really knew I wanted to.”*

*- Lilian Rodriguez  
Gem City Crew rower  
USRowing Women’s Youth PR2 1x Champion*

Para-athletes span a wide range of abilities, from those who only use their arms to row to those who row with their full body with minor impairment, and are grouped based on ability (PR1, PR2, PR3).

**Eligible impairment types**    impairment must be permanent and verifiable

<b>Impaired muscle power</b>	<i>reduced or no ability to voluntarily contract their muscles in order to move or generate force</i>
<b>Impaired range of movement</b>	<i>restriction or lack of passive movement in one or more joints</i>
<b>Limb deficiency</b>	<i>total or partial absence of bones or joints</i>
<b>Hypertonia</b>	<i>increase in muscle tension that impairs movement caused by damage to the central nervous system</i>
<b>Athetosis</b>	<i>continual slow involuntary movements</i>
<b>Ataxia</b>	<i>uncoordinated movements caused by damage to the central nervous system</i>
<b>Vision impairment</b>	<i>reduced or no vision in both eyes, as a result of damage to the eye structure, optical nerves or optical pathways, or visual cortex of the brain</i>

Examples of underlying health conditions causing impairments include, but are not limited to: spinal cord injury, muscular dystrophy, brachial plexus injury, Erb’s palsy, spina bifida, sacral agenesis, Guillain-Barre syndrome, joint contractures, arthrogyrosis, ankyloses, congenital limb deficiency, amputation as a result of trauma or illness, cerebral palsy, stroke, brain injury, multiple sclerosis, spinocerebellar ataxia, Freiderichs ataxia, retinitis pigmentosa, cone rod dystrophy, macular degeneration, congenital cataracts, myopia, bilateral anophthalmia.

We are excited to continue to grow our para-athletes and are working with our national governing body, USRowing, to further the opportunities available. Please share this with and encourage all families with children that might have para-eligible-impairments to reach out to me directly (alex.walters@gmail.com) to discuss further and learn more about next steps. On behalf of Gem City Crew I would like to invite them to learn more about our team and Para-rowing.

Sincerely,



Alex Walters

Head coach, Gem City Crew