



# A special day at the lake

East Texas Sports Fest brings  
outdoor adventure to people with  
disabilities...

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## GLADEWATER -

Heather Villarreal sat nervously waiting to be wheeled into the water. Her dad, Francisco, smiled and stood by while she readied herself to experience her first waterski ride.

As she sat back in the tan wheelchair, two volunteers backed her into the water and helped her get fastened into specially modified skis. Her dad, outfitted with a purple life jacket, already was in the yellow boat that would take Heather out onto the lake.

A helper fastened his skis and stood alongside Heather as he signaled the OK and held the end of the rope. As the boat took off,

volunteer Linda Streeter stood on the shore and cheered Heather on her journey. "It's the most awesome thing to watch," Streeter said. "It's as much fun for those of us out here working as it is for them," she said.

When she returned, Heather swam back toward shore and was helped into a wheelchair to be taken back on the banks.

"That was cool, wasn't it?" Heather's dad said when he returned to shore. "It was fun," Heather said as she held a blue tackle box she received while fishing.

And fun she had, along with about 400 disabled people and their friends and families who came out for the third annual East Texas Sports Fest. The event, held at Lake Gladewater, provides recreation activities for people who have disabilities.

By the end of the day, the 9-year-old fourth grader had been horseback riding, fishing, kayaking, waterskiing and handcycling.

The East Texas Sports Fest, sponsored by the non-profit organization People On Wheels Encouraging Responsibility, is an event for people of all ages and abilities, said president and co-founder Judie Moffett.

Moffett said she founded POWER in response to a lack of information about resources available to people with disabilities. "It started out as a support group and turned non-profit," said Moffett, who suffered a spinal cord injury in a car accident 10 years ago. "Our mission is to help enable people with disabilities. We are always looking for opportunities to meet newly injured people for mentoring," she said.

Sponsors traveled from as far away as Galveston, Moffett said. The waterski group came from Houston, the kayaking/handcycling organization were from Galveston, the horseback riding volunteers traveled from the Tyler area and the people who provided the fishing were from Arp.