Student Placement Facilitator for the MacWheelers Program

Audrey L. Hicks, PhD.,
Professor, Dept. of Kinesiology

MacWheelers

MacWheelers is an adapted exercise and wellness program, specifically geared for adults living with spinal cord injury and other mobility impairments living in the Hamilton community. We offer one-on-one assistance from a student volunteer to assist participants to carry out their exercise programs on our innovative adaptive equipment. We currently serve 75 active participants with the help of a team of over 150 student volunteers per semester.

Role of Student Placement Facilitator

- To enhance the experiential education opportunity for the 200 undergraduate students who volunteer in the MacWheelers program each year
- To ensure that all volunteers are adequately trained to provide optimum support to MacWheelers members

Volunteer Training

Specific Improvements to Volunteer Training made possible by the FWI Position include:

- Enhanced volunteer recruitment
- Improved training
- Continuous education
- Increased supervision
- Implementation of a Case Management system (see below)

Case Management

Specific accomplishments related to case management include:

- Ensuring that all exercise prescriptions followed the Physical Activity Guidelines for adults with spinal cord injury
- Making each staff member responsible for a small (manageable) number of MacWheelers members, to optimize exercise prescription and progression
- Having volunteers actively take part in monitoring exercise progression in MacWheelers members

Project Evaluation and Sustainability

As a result of our successful pilot project with the Student Placement Facilitator, we have created a new staff position with the MacWheelers (funded partly through research grants), focused on optimizing the training and experiential education opportunities of the undergraduate student volunteers. We also plan to implement a volunteer evaluation system in order to get feedback from the students on how they rate their volunteer experience.

Research Opportunities

Several faculty members in the Department of Kinesiology have research interests related to exercise in individuals with spinal cord injuries. The Student Placement Facilitator has contributed to the research endeavors in our department by:

- Linking undergraduate students with graduate student research projects
- Linking undergraduate students with faculty research projects
- Recruiting volunteers for specific research initiatives