

is, divers can go to any depth without limitations. Nick Westermeyer, 30, from Ohio, has quadriplegia but has some movement in his arms and hands. He started diving at age 25 as a Level B diver and has since dived all over the world. "With my HSA certification, under the water I'm on an equal level with any diver down there."

**Training the trainer:
reassuring the diver**

HSA also offers an Instructor Training Course (ITC), which, according to Debbie Logan, Education Coordinator, Training and Quality Management, at PADI, is recognized as the most respected instructor-training program in the world. (Many dive instructors with PADI, NAUI, and the YMCA/YWCA are HSA-certified as well. Ask your local dive instructor about his or her credentials.) At HSA the dive instructor undergoes special training, which includes sensitivity and background training on 13 different types of disabilities. For example, they are taught about how paraplegia or cerebral palsy can affect ability levels in general, and how these disor-

ders translate into special needs in relation to diving. Training includes handling such issues as accessibility, transferring, helping dive students get in and out of the water, swimming instruction, and an explanation on any special equipment. According to Gatacre, the average HSA instructor has been diving for 10 years and is a mature, professional diver. "We try to teach instructors what it is like to not have legs or arms, or to be com-

pletely controlled by another person. We ask them to dive with blacked-out masks to simulate what a blind person would experience."

Getting trained by an HSA-certified instructor, says Gatacre, means getting certified by the best there is. "Once you finish a dive training program by an HSA-certified instructor, you can virtually join any dive program in the world." What are you waiting for? ■

Resources

Handicapped Scuba Association (HSA)

Phone: (800) 673-5084
Web site: <http://www.hsascuba.com>
(This resource also provides a list of HSA-certified instructors and programs in your area.)

PADI Americas

Phone: (949) 858-7234
Web site: <http://www.padi.com>

Fat Cat Diving and Excursions

Phone: (809) 586-1392
E-mail: fat_cat_sa@yahoo.com

Oklahoma Scuba

Phone: (405) 366-8111
E-mail: okscuba@telepath.com

To inquire about eligibility for financial aid to learn to dive, contact:

Underwater Safaris Scuba Center

Phone: 773-348-3999 (voice/TDD)
Web site: <http://www.uwsafaris.com>

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