

It's certainly not hyperbole to say that Alana Nichols' life has been a testament to overcoming obstacles and clearing paths for others.

Alana, who grew up in Farmington and began her remarkable athletic journey at the University of New Mexico, has set new standards in the world of paralympic competition. She is a five-time Paralympian, six-time medalist and the first American woman to win gold medals in both Summer and Winter Olympic/Paralympic Games.

Alana faced difficult setbacks almost from the beginning. Her father was killed by a drunk driver when she was 9-months old, and she and her sisters were raised by their grandparents. Even more remarkable, Alana's dazzling run of success came after a devastating injury that would have ended the dreams of many athletes. As a teenager, Alana suffered a spinal cord injury during a ski-jumping accident in Colorado in 2000. Despite extensive surgery, broken vertebrae left her paralyzed from the waist down.

It was not enough to stop Alana. Nine months after her accident, she moved to Albuquerque and began attending UNM. In 2002, she was introduced to wheelchair basketball — the beginning of what has been a superb-if-unlikely career in sports.

As an athlete, Alana's versatility has been jaw-dropping. She has won international medals in wheelchair basketball, skiing, and kayak racing. She has since begun competing (and winning) in adaptive surfing and has joined the effort to see the sport included in the 2032 Paralympic Games.

In addition to excelling in a wide variety of sports, Alana has made a name for herself as an advocate and spokesperson for athletes with disabilities. Her achievements have been recognized on state, national and international levels as Alana has been named Colorado Sports Woman of the Year (2011), nominated three times for ESPY Awards, inducted into the Christopher and Dana Reeves Foundation Superman Hall of Heroes and received the Challenged Athlete Foundation Trailblazer Award.

After beginning her college education at UNM, Alana transferred to the University of Arizona where she studied special education rehab and school psychology. She later attended graduate school at the University of Alabama and earned a master's degree in kinesiology.

Alana now resides in Colorado but maintains her New Mexico roots. She is an accomplished public speaker and has appeared on numerous national television programs including The Today Show, Late Night with Conan O'Brien and the Katie Couric Show. Alana's career has led her to meet two U.S. Presidents, and she continues to work and advocate for athletes with disabilities with national sports organizations including ESPNW, The Women's Sports Foundation and The Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation.

#### Alana's Accomplishments

- 2016 Paralympic Games Sprint Kayaking (7th Place)

- 2016 Paralympic Hopeful- Sprint Kayak
- 2015 ISA Worlds Adaptive Surfing Championships - 7th overall in otherwise all-male field for the Upright division
- 2015 Duisburg, Germany: World Cup Bronze (Sprint Kayak 200m)
- 2014 Sochi, Russia: Paralympic Silver Medal (Alpine Skiing Downhill)
- 2012 Paralympic Summer Games Wheelchair Basketball (4th place)
- 2011 Parapan American Games - Gold Medal
- 2011 World Champion, Downhill Super-G
- 2011 Paralympic Athlete of the Year
- 2011 Colorado Sports Woman of the Year
- 2011 NWBA National Champion
- 2010-12 Three-Time ESPY Nominee
- 2010 Paralympic Winter Games, four-time medalist (Gold Medals: Downhill & Giant Slalom; Silver Medal: Super-G; Bronze Medal: Super Combined)
- 2009 National Champion (Downhill and Super-G)
- 2008 Paralympic Summer Games, Gold Medal Wheelchair Basketball
- 2007 Parapan American Games, Gold Medal Wheelchair Basketball