

## Press Release

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### **BlazeSports Travels to South Africa to Host National Sport and Recreation Festival for Youth**

**Pretoria, SOUTH AFRICA** – From September 14-20, BlazeSports America staff traveled to Pretoria, South Africa to co-host the National Sport and Recreation Festival for Youth. Day one of the event, organized in cooperation with Kennesaw State University and the University of Pretoria, included lectures and workshops for over 60 university students, youth sports leaders, parents, and professionals in the field of disability sport. BlazeSports staff and KSU provided information on topics as wide-ranging as the potential for sport to promote social change, special issues faced by women and girls in obtaining recreation opportunities, and best practice in recreation and sport for people with disabilities.

Day two of the Festival was filled with hands-on, interactive fun and friendly competition. BlazeSports staff facilitated matches of team handball, sit volleyball, and boccia for young athletes with disabilities. The event concluded with a global dance where participants mingled and made new friends, both South African and American.

The Festival for Youth was a continuation of BlazeSports' mission to spread awareness and promote visibility of individuals with disabilities. "One of the important things we accomplished," said Nisha Kittles, BlazeSports' Creative Projects Specialist, "was the new understanding given to the participating students not only about sport, but about people with disabilities." Marybeth Jones, the Assistant Director of Sport and Program Services, praised the participants' "tenacity, incredible enthusiasm, and endless amount of spirit." "The disability was not the focus," she continued, "but rather the abilities and opportunity for involvement."

The Festival was part of continuing, multifaceted program organized by BlazeSports and the participating universities to promote the cause of disability sport in South Africa. In addition to events like this one, the program includes an international youth sports camp, an exchange of emerging professionals, and the "twinning" of US community-based sports programs and teams with programs in South Africa.

#### **About BlazeSports America**

*Formed from the spirit of the 1996 Summer Paralympic Games held in Atlanta, BlazeSports America is a nonprofit organization that advances the lives of youth and adults with physical disability through Paralympic and recreational sport, healthy lifestyles, and the prevention of chronic illness. BlazeSports provides sport teams, afterschool programs, camps, leadership/pre-vocational training, competitions, and sporting events for individuals with spinal cord injury, spina bifida, cerebral palsy, traumatic brain injury, muscular dystrophy, amputation, visual impairment or blindness as well other physical disabilities. In addition, BlazeSports provides educational programs for officials, coaches, educators and volunteers. For more information, visit [www.blazesports.org](http://www.blazesports.org).*