MAKING AN IMPACT

CHANGING LIVES OF YOUTH & VETERANS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES THROUGH THE POWER OF ADAPTIVE SPORTS & RECREATION

BLAZESPORTS AMERICA

2017 Annual Report
BlazeSports Receives USOC’s “Rings of Gold” Honor for the 2nd Year in a Row!

BlazeSports America is honored to be the recipient of the United States Olympic Committee’s 2017 “Rings of Gold” award for Outstanding Sports Program — FOR THE SECOND YEAR IN A ROW! In 2016, BlazeSports was recognized for our outstanding Youth sports programming and this year we were honored for the impact our Veterans adaptive sports program is making. No other organization has ever been a “Rings of Gold” honoree twice!

The US Olympic Committee “Rings of Gold” award annually recognizes a sports program dedicated to helping athletes develop their Olympic or Paralympic dreams, and reach their highest athletic and personal potential. We are honored to be recognized by the US Olympic Committee in this way for our continuous improvement in program quality, and the positive impact on the people we serve.

BlazeSports Swimmer, McClain Hermes, brings home the GOLD from the World Para Swimming Championships!

BlazeSports America is very proud of our Team USA member, McClain Hermes for her amazing debut at the 2017 World Para Swimming Championships in Mexico City. McClain started the competition strong securing the first silver medal for Team USA at the Francisco Marquez Olympic Swimming Pool, swimming the S11 100 free in a time of 1:19.67 before going on to set an American record and win the gold in the 400 free (5:46.00) in her world championships debut! McClain’s journey was amazing, medaling in every event she swam for a total of 5 medals:


BlazeSports Jr. Hawks athlete, Jordan Kozloski, was honored to be chosen for the 2017 U.S. Women’s Wheelchair Basketball National Team. Jordan joined three returning U.S. Paralympic gold medalists as part of the elite roster of 12 athletes to represent the United States at the 2017 International Wheelchair Basketball Federation America’s Zonal Qualifier in August.
Meet BlazeSports America’s 2017 HIGH SCHOOL ALL AMERICANS

Five BlazeSports Youth Athletes were recognized as 2017 U.S. Paralympic High School All-Americans. Four of those All Americans are from our Track & Field team. Recipients were chosen based on their performance in competition. Only 71 high school athletes in the country made the cut. Our BlazeSports 2016/2017 High School All Americans are: Jordan (Shot Put); Adam (Long Jump); Cathryn (Discus & Javelin); Carson (Long Jump & Shot Put).

From the BlazeSports Swim Team, McClain Hermes was recognized as a 2016/2017 Scholastic All-American. In order to be considered for the Scholastic All-American Team, swimmers must maintain a 3.5 GPA for the current academic year and swim a time equal to a 2016 Winter Junior Championships qualifying time in any event during the qualification period.

BlazeSports Veterans Featured on Morning Express with Robin Meade

HLN’s Hines Ward joined BlazeSports America for a day of Veterans Golf to see first-hand how the organization uses sports to help veterans with disabilities reintegrate into the community, build relationships and lead healthier, active lives. The story, including interviews with several Veterans was broadcast on Morning Express with Robin Meade.

BlazeSports Swimmers Interviewed by Michael Koenigs, ABC News

BlazeSports Swim Team members and great friends, Grace Bunke & McClain Hermes, were interviewed by Michael Koenigs (ABC News) on what it means to swim together and support each other as one faces progressive blindness and the other fights bone cancer.
BlazeSports is making a tangible difference in the lives of our athletes - literally opening pathways for improved academic achievement, college scholarships, physical fitness and well-being. Several of our BlazeSports America Youth athletes including Josh & Chance who were recognized in 2017 for their academic success, character, and athletic achievements.

Teammates on both the BlazeSports wheelchair basketball and track & field teams, Josh & Chance both graduated from high school in 2017, received scholarships and are now playing wheelchair basketball at the collegiate level, Josh at the University of Illinois and Chance at Auburn University.

Adaptive Sports opened the door for them to meet other people like themselves, build healthy relationships with peers and coaches, stay active and learn the value of hard work and working as a team.

Josh’s mom, Angie Joines said, “When Josh and his team won their first National Championship, he (and his teammates) discovered what it meant to be true champions, as they went from underdogs to champions. To watch how he’s grown since then is heart-warming. No longer “disabled” just driven to be successful in all areas of life.”

In 2017, Josh graduated with a 4.2 GPA from the North Cobb High School International Studies Magnet Program and was selected as an alternate to the 2017 U23 National Wheelchair Basketball Team. He now attends the University of Illinois where he now competes on the wheelchair basketball team and studying political science and business on a full 5 year scholarship. He plans to attend law school and then work in public policy or corporate law to increase the work opportunities for people with physical disabilities.

Chance enjoys and is competitive in many adaptive sports, but loves wheelchair basketball the most. “I fell in love with wheelchair basketball in a youth adaptive program. These sports have been the driving force in my everyday success and have inspired others along the way.”

Chance’s passion and dedication earned him the title of U.S. Jr. National Champion in three events - javelin, shot put and discus. His incredible work ethic and positive outlook on life were also recognized with the 2017 Positive Athlete Award.

“I found BlazeSports and fell in love with it from the first practice. The BlazeSports wheelchair basketball team paved the way for me to have the opportunity to play the sport I love in college.”

—Josh J.
Varsity Wheelchair Basketball athlete

The Power of Adaptive Sports
In Action: Meet Josh & Chance

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2017 BlazeSports All-Star Summer Sports Camp

BlazeSports America believes that every child has the right to play, live a healthy lifestyle, make friends, an experience the benefits of participating in sports and recreation. Our BlazeSports Summer All-Star Sports Camp is a one-of-a-kind opportunity for youth with disabilities to do just that. A fun, week-long, overnight summer camp, the BlazeSports All-Star camp enables youth with physical disabilities to make new friends, and try a variety of sports in a safe, supportive environment. This year’s camp included, swimming, archery, climbing, zip-lining, wheelchair basketball, adaptive track & field, and more.

BlazeSports Athletes Break Records at the 3rd Annual BlazeSports Olympic Day Open Track & Field Meet

The 3rd Annual BlazeSports America Olympic Day Track & Field Meet is a USA sanctioned open track & field meet for all Youth and Adult Track & Field athletes with physical disabilities. This year’s meet was held June 24th at St. Pius X High School in Atlanta and served as a qualifying meet for Nationals while doubling as a Paralympian meet & greet! BlazeSports had some incredible performances this year, officially breaking National records in our field events as well “unofficially” breaking National records: Cathryn Gray for Discus, Cedric Geter in both Javelin & Discus and Nick Walls in both Discus & Shot Put!
Swimming has positively impacted my life by proving that anything is possible. Even if it takes a little longer, my coaches and peers push me to be better and work harder to achieve my goals. I want to show people who I am: a friendly, passionate, hardworking swimmer that never gives up.

— Vica B.
BlazeSports Swimmer

BlazeSports America provides robust programs, camps and clinics for youth with disabilities.

Our first priority at BlazeSports is to introduce the positive impact of sport and recreation to youth ages 6-22 with physical disabilities, no matter the level of skill. From beginners to competitive athletes, our adaptive sport and recreation programs provide pathways to increased self-confidence, better physical and mental health, and improved independence.

BlazeSports is making a positive difference in the lives of our young athletes - literally opening pathways for improved academic achievement, physical fitness and well-being, athletic development, leadership building and even college scholarship opportunities.

2017 YOUTH PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS:

BlazeSports Atlanta Jr. Hawks Wheelchair Basketball Varsity Teams in the Top 10! The BlazeSports Jr. Hawks Varsity team earned the rank of #2 in the Nation after going 5-0 and being crowned Varsity Champions of the 2017 Courage Kenny Classic. The BlazeSports Prep team was ranked #10 in a highly competitive group. The #5 team is Lakeshore who we lost to in overtime in Charlotte.

Five BlazeSports Youth Athletes Named U.S. All-Americans! Five BlazeSports Youth Athletes were recognized as 2017 U.S. Paralympic High School All-Americans. Four of those All Americans were from our Track & Field team: Jordan (Shot Put); Adam (Long Jump); Cathryn (Discus & Javelin); Carson (Long Jump & Shot Put). From the BlazeSports Swim Team, McClain Hermes was recognized as a 2016/2017 Scholastic All-American.

Blazesports Swimmer McClain Hermes Brings Home the GOLD from the World Para Swimming Championships! McClain started the competition strong securing the first silver medal for Team USA, swimming the S11 100 free in a time of 1:19.67 before going on to set an American record and win the gold in the 400 free (5:46.00) in her world championships debut!

BlazeSports Inaugural Youth Halloween Extravaganza Brings Families Together. Families and Youth across all BlazeSports programs came together on October 29th at Roswell Area Park for a day of fun and fellowship including a costume contest, candy & treats, picnic yard games, basketball and other fun, sports & recreation opportunities!

“I don’t know what I would do if I couldn’t swim. It’s my happy place.”

— McClain Hermes
BlazeSports Swimmer
BlazeSports is making a difference in the lives of our Veterans with disabilities through adaptive sports programs, clinics, and competitions. These programs provide opportunities for Veterans and military personnel with physical disabilities to become active again, get out of the house, and get physically fit. We see first hand the impact sports and recreation has on the community reintegration process post-injury. It is an essential part of successful long-term recovery process providing recurring opportunities for Veterans to be active while at the same time connecting with fellow service members and their community.

2017 Veteran Adaptive Sport Programming:

Archery  Bowling  Golf
Climbing  Cycling  Rowing
Swimming  Track & Field

2017 Veteran Program Highlights:

BlazeSports Partnered with PGA REACH to offer “PGA HOPE Atlanta” golf program to Veterans.

Through this new partnership, Veterans with disabilities were given the opportunity to learn how to play the game from local PGA/LPGA Teaching Professionals and adaptive golf coaches. It was an instant hit connecting Veterans with the PGA team and adaptive coaches, beautiful facilities and adaptive golf equipment designed to get them back into the game or learn the game of golf, regardless of physical challenges.

BlazeSports Archery Program Hits the Mark: Blazesports’ Veteran Archery Program continued to grow in 2017 with many of our Veterans competing & winning (6 Gold medals & 1 Silver medal) in archery competitions across the U.S.

BlazeSports Veterans were very Competitive in 2017: BlazeSports America supports Veterans through competitions like the annual BlazeSports America Olympic Day Track & Field meet as well as other regional and national competitions. In 2017, our Veterans competed in over 8 competitions nationally winning 27 medals.

- Jacques Swafford 2016 World Rankings - #6 in Shot Put, #10 in Discus Throw F55, #13 in Javelin.
- Cedric Geter: National Veteran Wheelchair Games - Gold in Shot Put, Javelin, Discus, Archery, 100m, & 400m; Valor Games Southeast - Gold in Archery; DAV 5k -1st Place, Set National records in Discus and Javelin
- Janice Copeland: Silver in 13.6 mile cycling at Valor Games Southeast.
- Charlie Perry: Valor Games Southeast - Gold in Sit Volleyball and Archery; Golden Age Games - Gold in Boccia.
- Alphonso Ogletree: Valor Games Southeast - Bronze in Table Tennis. Silver in Air Pistol.
- Errol McKnight: Endeavor Games: Gold & Bronze in Archery; Dixie Games - Gold in Archery; Valor Games Southeast - Silver in Archery & Sit Volleyball.
- Norman Roberson: State Archery Competition - Gold in Archery; Southeast Valor Games - Bronze in Archery.
- Anthony Jewel: Golden Age Games - Silver in Basketball.

“BlazeSports gives me the platform through their archery & bowling programs to participate in sports again and meet other Vets like me. It’s given me new hope and courage to move forward and live life, rather than sitting around at home doing nothing. I love the excitement I feel when I try a new sport - it makes me feel alive!”

— Alphonso, U. S Army
Since 2003, BlazeSports America™ has been a training and education leader in the field of adaptive sports and recreation. The BlazeSports Institute for Applied Science is now the BlazeSports Institute for Adaptive Sports and Recreation™ – offering certification opportunities, online tools and resources to build the core competencies of adaptive sports practitioners working with Youth, Adults and Veterans with a physical disability.

The BlazeSports Institute of Adaptive Sports and Recreation introduced the Certified Disability Sport Specialist (CDSS) program in 2009 to fill a void in national training and education within the adaptive sport and recreation fields. Our curriculum equips practitioners, coaches and teachers in communities and schools with the knowledge to deliver safe programming and adhere to the standards of best practices in the field.

In 2016, BlazeSports conducted a comprehensive national training and education needs assessment to better understand the current needs of adaptive sport and physical activity practitioners. Based on this research, BlazeSports developed a new framework to expand and update the existing CDSS curriculum in core competency areas. This updated curriculum launched in September, 2017 as the Certified Adaptive Recreation & Sports Specialist™ (CARSS™).

BlazeSports Builds Capacity in Adaptive Sport and Physical Activity

**GOAL OF THE BLAZESPORTS INSTITUTE**

- To build the capacity of community-based practitioners in order to provide adaptive sport and recreation programs for individuals with physical disabilities.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE BLAZESPORTS INSTITUTE**

- To improve the knowledge and skills of adaptive sport providers
- To increase the number of adaptive or inclusive sport programs in communities and schools

**THE CHALLENGE:**

More than 1.1 Billion people worldwide have a physical disability, including more than 56 million Americans.

Individuals with physical disabilities are less physically active than their peers due to lack of access to opportunities and lack of trained professionals.
CARSS™, THE ONLY ADAPTIVE SPORTS CERTIFICATION OF IT’S KIND... JUST GOT BETTER!

The BlazeSports America Certified Disability Sport Specialist certification has been updated and replaced with a new certification, Certified Adaptive Recreation and Sports Specialist (CARSS). Developed with the expertise and input of a variety of professionals in the adaptive sports and recreation field, CARSS reflects more accurately where the field of adaptive sports and recreation has evolved. Core content areas of the CARSS certification include: history of adaptive sports & related laws; understanding disabilities & disability awareness; program planning, implementation & evaluation; risk management & injury prevention; partnership building; recruitment & promotion; adaptive equipment and facilities. The curriculum addresses the needs of children/youth, adults and veterans with various physical disabilities.

CARSS is offered as an online course with two certification levels. CARSS is not sport-specific and enhances existing certifications in sport, physical activity and therapeutic recreation such as Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialists and Certified Inclusive Fitness Trainer. Through completion of our CARSS program, volunteers, coaches and other professionals can demonstrate to employers and organizations alike that they are leaders in adaptive sports and recreation program development schools with the knowledge to deliver safe programming and adhere to the standards of best practices in the field.

CARSS™ Certification Core Competency Areas

1. History of Adaptive Sports & Related Laws
2. Disabilities & Disability Awareness
3. Adaptive Physical Activity & Recreation
4. Program Planning, Implementation & Evaluation
5. Marketing & Communication
6. Partnership Building
7. Risk Management & Injury Prevention
8. Accessible Facilities
9. Adaptive Equipment

“BlazeSports America has a successful track record of providing more opportunities for people with disabilities to be physically active through adaptive sports and recreation training and education. We are thrilled to launch our updated national certification and curriculum which will significantly increase the number of coaches, volunteers and professionals across the U.S. equipped with the most up-to-date knowledge in the field to run safe and effective adaptive sports and recreation programs.”

Mara Galic, Operations Director, BlazeSports America.
Impacting and Enhancing GLOBAL AWARENESS of Sport For Social Impact

BlazeSports International Continues to Impact the Global Community

BlazeSports is committed to empowering individuals with disabilities all over the world to live active and healthy lifestyles in order to improve overall quality of life. In globally targeted regions, BlazeSports International works with government agencies, National Paralympic committees (NPC), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international program administrators, and recreation leaders to raise awareness of the importance of inclusion and sport participation for all. BlazeSports works with local communities to solve challenges, increase access to adapted sports opportunities and build capacity of leaders.

2017 INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

USAID’s Sports for Youth with Disabilities Initiative in Uganda

USAID’s Sports for Youth with Disabilities Initiative was launched in October 2016 in collaboration with the Uganda Paralympic Committee. The Uganda Sports for Youth with Disabilities initiative is a three-year sport development and health project to build capacity related to inclusion and adaptive sport in Uganda and get kids with physical disabilities more active.

Goals of USAID’s Sports for Youth with Disabilities Initiative in Uganda:

- Secure multi-sector support & commitment to program goals
- Development of a sustainable infrastructure
- Train community-based practitioners in adaptive sport, inclusion & physical literacy
- Serve children with and without disabilities through sports festivals and other programs, with an emphasis on girls.

2017 Adaptive Sports Summit

On January 19 and 20, 2017, 41 attendees from 33 organizations from Kampala and Gulu representing all sectors came together for the 2017 Adaptive Sports Summit hosted by the Uganda Paralympic Committee and BlazeSports International. The
Summit included training workshops to equip organizations and service providers with inclusive strategies to engage youth with physical disabilities through sports and activities. Special guests, US Ambassador Deborah Malac and Rosemary Seninde, Ugandan Minister of State for Primary Education, Ministry for Education and Sports spoke to attendees in support of the project.

2017 Training Workshops & Sport Festivals

In December 2017, BlazeSports International in partnership with the Uganda Paralympic Committee returned to Kampala and Gulu to host two of four training Workshops & Sports Festivals in Kampala & Gulu. Each training workshop consisted of 1 ½ days of interactive classroom discussion and activities followed by a 1 day sports festival. The festivals were planned and implemented by BlazeSports, Uganda Paralympic Committee staff, and the participants that attended the training workshops as a hands-on learning opportunity to implement new skills and to promote positive messaging regarding individuals with physical disabilities.

The Sports Festivals were well attended (reaching nearly 1,000 children). Extensive media coverage in both Kampala (13 outlets) and Gulu (8 outlets) workshops/festivals resulted in 9 news clips of the trainings and Sport Festivals.
With your support, BlazeSports America can continue to grow strong and change lives. In addition to the goal of adding new programs and improving our organization, the adaptive sports programs outlined in this report are in constant need of funding for successful execution and ability for BlazeSports to continue to change the lives individuals with physical disabilities through sports.

Thank you in advance for considering donating to BlazeSports America

www.blazesports.org/donate-now

“We cannot say in words how much Jordan’s participation in BlazeSports means for her, as well as our family. Jordan loves the social aspects of being a BlazeSports team member as much as she loves being able to compete.”

—Parent of BlazeSports Track & Field Athlete

BlazeSports America relies on the generosity of U.S. and international volunteers, organizations, and contributors to carry out our mission to change lives through adaptive sports. We wish to thank all of our 2017 funders, partners and sponsors. Please visit www.blazesports.org/donate-now and consider making a life-changing gift of sport in the lives of children and veterans with physical disabilities.

**Funders, Partners & Sponsors**

Abreu Foundation  
American Academy for Cerebral Palsy & Developmental Medicine  
Adaptive Sports U.S.A.  
Atlanta Hawks Foundation  
Atlanta Track Club  
Atlanta VA Medical Center  
Camp Twin Lakes  
Centennial High School  
Center for the Visually Impaired  
Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta  
Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation  
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Georgia State Golf Association  
Atlanta Rowing Club  
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PGA Reach  
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Quizno’s  
Resurgens Charitable Foundation  
Shepherd Center  
Team Red, White and Blue  
US Agency for International Development  
US Department of Veteran’s Affairs  
Waffle House Foundation  
USA Climbing  
US Olympic Committee  
US Paralympics  
Young Men’s Service League
At BlazeSports America, our mission is to CHANGE THE LIVES of children and adults with physical disabilities through ADAPTIVE SPORT and RECREATION.

Special Thanks to our BlazeSports Coaches & Volunteers that Make our Programs Possible.

**Track & Field**
- Michael Higgins, Head Coach
- Jessica Galli-Cloy
- Maggie Frederick
- Steven Green
- Marc Lancaster
- Gus Smith
- Adam Stone

**Adaptive Swimming**
- Fred Lamback, Head Coach
- Nisa Somers

**Wheelchair Basketball**
- Eric Johnson, Head Coach
- Alex Armas
- Patrick Chapman
- Josh Loop
- Brad Elzey
- Paul Hutchinson
- Jason Joines
- Marc Lancaster

**Archery (Veteran)**
- Shantelle Mitchell

**Archery (Youth)**
- Pat Bowen

**Cycling (Veteran)**
- Errol McKnight

**Golf (Veteran)**
- David Windsor

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5,129
HOURS OF ADAPTIVE PROGRAMMING IN 2017
- AN INCREASE OF 41% FROM 2016

PROGRAMMING HOURS TRACKED ACROSS ALL BLAZESPORTS PROGRAMS
(YOUTH, VETERAN & EQUIPMENT RENTAL)

www.blazesports.org
Based in Atlanta and celebrating 20 years of operation in 2016, BlazeSports America embraces the mission of changing the lives of children and adults with physical disabilities through sport. In addition to its US efforts, BlazeSports America has served individuals and communities in 11 countries, and partners with organizations around the world to provide adaptive sports leadership to an increasingly international constituency. The BlazeSports interdisciplinary approach includes community based sport and recreation adaptive programs, training and education, leadership programs, Paralympic sports, camps and clinics, continuing education and certification, sports diplomacy and sports for social impact. BlazeSports America serves children and adults through adaptive sports and recreation programs, as well as military veterans with physical disabilities and service related injuries.

BlazeSports America is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that is the legacy organization of the 1996 Paralympic Games held in Atlanta, Georgia offering adaptive sports programs and services that encourage lifelong health, build leadership skills, foster independence and inclusion. BlazeSports America is a member of the United States Olympic Committee – Multi-Sport Organizational Council, and the USA Member Organization of the Cerebral Palsy International Sport and Recreation Association (CPISRA).

Support BlazeSports America!

Ways to Give:
- Donate online via our secure website. All major credit cards accepted. www.blazesports.org/donate-now
- Call us at 404-270-2000
- Mail a check to:
  BlazeSports America
  1670 Oakbrook Drive, Suite 331
  Norcross, GA 30093 USA

Get a BlazeSports License plate
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Learn more at your local tag office for details or go online:

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