



2020

# Impact Report

*Changing the lives of youth & veterans  
with physical disabilities through the  
power of adaptive sports & recreation*



GOLD MEDAL  
PARALYMPIC SPORT CLUB  
EXCELLENCE PROGRAM



MULTI-SPORT  
ORGANIZATION

# BlazeSports

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## **BlazeSports America Friends, Volunteers and Supporters –**

This has been an unprecedented and challenging year for the entire world. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, families across the country are separated from their loved ones as traditions have been set aside with the goal to stay safe and healthy. And while the pace of the world has shifted, it has not changed our progress at BlazeSports. In fact, the work that we did in 2020 was of the utmost importance now more than ever.

In March of this year, like most businesses, BlazeSports shut down temporarily. Quickly into that shut down, the BlazeSports team asked, are we needed now more than ever? Who is caring for our veterans who face depression and suicide due to isolation? How are our youth athletes continuing to exercise and gain the skills they need to foster success? The answers to these questions required us to quickly adapt to virtual programs. And then beginning in July, we started the process of safely returning to play in most of our youth and veteran sports. At the end of this year, we are back with safe in person programs for all of our youth sports and nearly all of our veteran sports.

In a year of turmoil and change, our work is now more important than ever. As said by one of our new BlazeSports family members:

*“As a new BlazeSports family, we feel truly blessed and thankful for the opportunity to learn from such amazing coaches, new friends, new families and have felt instant encouragement. What an uplifting experience especially in this particular year. The love and welcome which we received has been such a blessing! My little guy is so excited to grow in his love for sports, experiencing true athletic skills and practices, all while being able to feel comfortable and loved. What a gift you all shared this year!” - New 2020 BlazeSports parent Marsha*

While COVID-19 is still impacting our programs, we look to 2021, the 25th anniversary of BlazeSports, with renewed hope for all we can accomplish together.

Best Wishes,



**Dawn Churi**  
Executive Director



**Andy McNeil**  
Board Chair

# Mission

To change the lives of children, youth and veterans with physical disabilities through adaptive sport, physical activity and recreation.

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# Vision

Our vision is that every individual with a physical disability has the access and opportunity to experience the joys and benefits of sport and physical activity in all aspects of their lives.

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## **BlazeSports Board of Directors 2020**

### **Chairman**

Andrew McNeil, Esq.

### **Treasurer**

Daniel Holland

Ira Blumenthal  
Kim Blumenthal  
Mechelle Brown  
Morrow Duane  
Richard Evans  
Pam Sawyer  
John T. Smith

## **BlazeSports Parent Advisory Board 2020** *(formed January 2020)*

Susan Fraser  
Don Grimsley  
Kelli Munkel (Chair)

# THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC AND Return to Play

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2020 has been an unprecedented and challenging year for individuals, organizations and the entire world.

In the beginning of the pandemic, BlazeSports shut down temporarily. We then began the transition of taking as many of our programs virtual as possible. Participation in the core BlazeSports programs stayed strong throughout the summer. Beginning in July of 2020, with guidance from the CDC and Department of Public Health, we began a plan to safely and gradually return to play.

Decisions on Return to Play were made based on science, guidance from the CDC and state and local public health officials as well as National Governing Bodies for each sport.

We began to officially Return to Play by offering select low-risk sports in small groups of 10 that can be enjoyed outdoors with masks required. All Return to Play programs were open only to current BlazeSports youth and veteran members. At the end of the year, we had safely returned to play in most, but not all of the BlazeSports programs. Programs like bowling and on-water rowing are in the works to safely return to play when the guidance allows.





# 2020 Events

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## Big Peach Slam Jam Wheelchair Basketball Tournament | January 25 - 26, 2020

The 2020 BlazeSports Big Peach Slam Jam presented by the Atlanta Hawks was the largest tournament of its kind in the Southeast. Sanctioned by the NWBA, the 4th annual Big Peach Slam Jam welcomed 22 teams and 13 states from across the US representing Varsity and Prep divisions. The event took place on January 25-26 at Suwanee Sports Academy. Congratulations to all of the teams and athletes who demonstrated great sportsmanship and skill on the court. We are grateful to the 100+ volunteers and our generous sponsors and partners who made the event a success.



## BlazeSports Welcomes Dawn Churi as Executive Director | August 1, 2020



## Launch of Wheelchair Tennis Clinics for Youth | August 8 & 22, 2020

BlazeSports and USTA Southern hosted a series of two very successful wheelchair tennis clinics for our youth at Will's Park Tennis Club in Alpharetta, GA.



## First Annual Run & Roll 5K | September 20, 2020

BlazeSports hosted the Inaugural Run & Roll Virtual 5k, with over 170 participants and raised over \$10,000 for our youth and veteran programs.

# 2020 Events

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## **The Hartford & Move United Surprise Wheelchair Event** | *October 26, 2020*

Two BlazeSports athletes, Keith DeBrosse and Yahweh Askin, were surprised with two brand new customized sports chairs as part of the Blazesports and The Hartford Ability Equipped program in partnership with Move United. The event was hosted by BlazeSports and took place at Centennial High School in Roswell.



## **BlazeSports offices move locations to allow for better storage for our essential adaptive sports equipment** | *October 29, 2020*



## **Updated CARSS I and NEW CARSS II Launch** | *November 5, 2020*

The BlazeSports America Certified Adaptive Recreation and Sports Specialist™ certification (CARSS™) now offers two levels of certification training on the most relevant, practical information for developing and implementing adaptive sports & recreation programs for people of all ages with various physical disabilities.



## **3rd Annual Patriotic Blaze-N-Raffle Virtual Reverse Raffle** | *December 5, 2020*

On December 5, 2020, BlazeSports hosted its annual Patriotic Blaze N' Raffle, virtually on Zoom. Raising over \$10,000, event proceeds were donated to BlazeSports youth and veteran programs.

# Athlete Accomplishments

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## *Senior Spotlight 2020*

We are proud to present a class of impressive BlazeSports athletes graduating this year and making an impact in the world around them as future alumni.



***Liz Pentecost***

Liz discovered BlazeSports in her junior year of high school and has been hooked ever since. She was a great asset to the Jr. Hawks wheelchair basketball team and has been accepted to the University of Arizona where she will continue playing ball.



***Bailey Moody***

Bailey has been with BlazeSports since 7th grade and will be attending University of Alabama in the fall and playing ball with the Tide. Bailey also made Team USA earlier this year and will be Tokyo bound next year to compete in the 2020 Paralympic Summer Games.



***John Joiner***

John has been with BlazeSports since he was 12 years old and is always a great team player that works hard and is committed to the game. He will be going to Southwest Minnesota State University in the fall and where he will continue to play wheelchair basketball.



***Emeril Gordon***

Emeril has been with BlazeSports since 2017 and swims on our BlazeSports swim team. She is an advocate for adaptive sports and says that being a part of Blaze has enabled her to gain the leadership skills and confidence to succeed.

# Training & Education

*Building Capacity in Adaptive Sport and Physical Activity Nationwide*



## **The BlazeSports America Certified Adaptive Recreation and Sports Specialist™**

The updated CARSS I and new CARSS II was launched on November 4th, 2020. We saw \$17,000 in revenue from CARSS and CARRS II for 2020. We look to the future and are working to continue to grow our training and education offerings in the year to come.



## **BlazeTOTS**

BlazeTOTS is a new BlazeSports initiative launched in 2020 that aims to increase opportunities for preschoolers with disabilities to be physically active and eat healthy.

### **Early Care and Learning Professional Training**

This interactive webinar series was created for early care and learning professionals interested in engaging preschoolers with disabilities in physical activity and healthy eating.

### **BlazeTOTS Parent/Family Webinar**

This webinar was designed for parents, families and caregivers of preschoolers with disabilities. Parents and families with a preschooler with a disability play an important role to ensure their kids have an Active Start in life. During the webinar, parents learn about our BlazeTOTS program and fun ways to get their preschoolers active and eating healthy.

## **YOUTH L.E.A.D** BLAZE SPORTS AMERICA

### **Youth LEAD**

Sport with a purpose. Building Leadership, Employment Readiness, Self-Advocacy and Positive Development of Youth with Physical Disabilities.

Youth LEAD is a new initiative of BlazeSports aimed at helping prepare young people with physical disabilities for adulthood through the transformative power of sport.

BlazeSports Youth LEAD program supports youth with physical disabilities' need to be actively involved in activities that will expose them to and offer the opportunity to practice not only the actual skills needed for a particular career, but also the work readiness skills needed to ultimately find and maintain employment.

### **Youth LEAD Webinars**

- So You're in College . Now What?  
– June 24th, 2020
- Pathways to Successful Transition for Youth with Disabilities – June 30th, 2020
- Setting Smart Goals – October 28th, 2020

### **Youth LEAD Podcasts**

- Finding your Career Path Podcast Series
- Motivational Monday Podcast: Youth LEAD and Self-Advocacy. What's the Connection?
- A Voice from Parents Podcast



# Youth & Veteran Programs

*BlazeSports uses sport as a vehicle for positive development, improved health and success on and off the field of play.*



## Youth Programs

*Offered Year-Round*

- Wheelchair Basketball – Prep, Varsity Red and Varsity White Teams
- Track & Field
- Swimming – Learn to Swim and Learn to Train
- Big Peach Slam Jam Wheelchair Basketball Tournament

## Youth Sport Clinics

- Tennis Clinics
- Lacrosse Clinics

## Veteran Programs

*Offered Year-Round*

- Archery
- Bowling
- CrossFit
- Cycling
- Rowing
- Yoga
- Water Aerobics



# Thank you

*To all our generous partners, funders, sponsors and individual donors who supported BlazeSports programs and services throughout 2020. We are grateful!*

## *Thank you to our sponsors:*

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# 2020

# Financial Summary

Figures based on BlazeSports FY2020 Audited Financial Statements, Mersereau, Lazenby & Rockas LLC.

## REVENUE AND OTHER SUPPORT

	WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS	WITH DONOR RESTRICTIONS	TOTAL
Contributions	\$85,593	\$0	\$85,593
Foundation Grants and Sponsors	\$19,923	\$116,611	\$136,534
Fees and other Revenue	\$17,324	\$0	\$17,324
State Grants	\$0	\$328,608	\$328,608
Government Grants	\$0	\$82,213	\$82,213
License Tags	\$13,328	\$0	\$13,328
Investment Income	\$117	\$0	\$117
Net Assets Released from Restriction – Satisfaction of Program Restrictions	\$526,116	(\$ 526,116 )	--
<b>Total Revenue and Other Support</b>	<b>\$662,401</b>	<b>\$1,316</b>	<b>\$663,717</b>

## EXPENSES

	WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS	WITH DONOR RESTRICTIONS	TOTAL
Program Services	\$530,727	\$0	\$530,727
National Programs	\$11,088	\$0	\$11,088
International Programs	\$339	\$0	\$339
Management and General	\$157,316	\$0	\$157,316
Fundraising	\$61,334	\$0	\$61,334
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$760,804</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$760,804</b>

	WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS	WITH DONOR RESTRICTIONS	TOTAL
Change in Net Assets	(\$98,403)	\$1,316	(\$97,087)
Net Assets, beginning of year	(\$78,001)	\$198,970	\$120,969
Net Assets, end of year	(\$176,404)	\$200,286	\$23,882



## BlazeSports America

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[www.blazesports.org](http://www.blazesports.org)

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BlazeSports America is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and the legacy organization of the 1996 Atlanta Paralympic Games. We offer adaptive sport programs and services that support good health, build leadership skills, foster independence and inclusion and reduce social isolation. Our training and education builds the capacity of current and future leaders in the field. BlazeSports is the two-time recipient of the US Olympic and Paralympics' Rings of Gold (2016 and 2017), a member of the US Olympic and Paralympic Committee Organizational Council, and the USA Member of Cerebral Palsy International Sport and Recreation Association.