



2022

Impact Report

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



BlazeSports

BlazeSports America Friends, Volunteers and Supporters -

As 2022 comes to an end, we want to take a moment to give thanks to everyone that supported BlazeSports this year. It is your commitment to ensuring the BlazeSports athletes have access to programs of equal quality and availability to their peers, that allows us to reflect on the year with pride. To our BlazeSports athletes, you are the inspiration for all that we do, and we are inspired by your stories each and every day.

This past year, BlazeSports has celebrated many successes and has significantly impacted the lives of the individuals we serve. Our youth program members have continued to expand with many of our programs now serving the largest numbers to date. Our basketball, track & field and swimming youth programs all traveled to national championships with tremendous success. Our veteran programs now include 10 weekly programs, and we continue to serve Veterans with physical disabilities in addition to those with PTSD.

One of the highlights of the year was the launching of the historic BlazeSports Lady Ballers, in partnerships with the Atlanta Hawks. The Lady Ballers is the only women's wheelchair basketball team in the state of Georgia, and we could not be more proud to work with this group as they break barriers and expand opportunities for female adaptive sports.

This year we also returned with our Blaze Day in the schools in which we bring adaptive sports into schools in Georgia to showcase both our amazing athletes and to educate and advocate for the power of adaptive sports. For our large events, we launched our wheelchair tennis tournament in partnership with ALTA and USTA Southern. We also continued the success of our annual events, hosting the second annual Peachtree Paragames, our 6th annual Big Peach Slam Jam, our 3rd annual 5k Run, Roll and Row, two military camps, Camp Phoenix and the Triumph of the Human Spirit Awards, honoring six individuals who have dedicated themselves to the power of the human spirit.

What a year! Please read more about our amazing athletes and program accomplishments in this report. Thank you to all our athletes, family members, staff, and volunteers for continuing to inspire us.

We look forward to the future with excitement.

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.

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.

BlazeSports Board of Directors 2022

Chairman

Andrew McNeil, Esq.

Duane Morrow

Pam Sawyer

John Smith

Mechelle Brown

Lisa Simmons

Chris Hood

Helen Dowdell

BlazeSports Parent Advisory Board 2022

Kelli Munkel (Chair)

Susan Fraser

Don Grimsley

Mechelle Brown

2022 Events

Military Family Camp

March 4-6th, 2022 and August 11-13th, 2022

BlazeSports Veteran and their families joined us for a family fun day at Camp Twin Lakes. Groups were separated by family and fun activities for all ages were provided including: rock climbing, archery, yoga, zip-lining, horseback riding, canoeing, fishing and much more.



Big Peach Slam Jam Wheelchair Basketball Tournament

February 4 & 5th, 2022

The 2022 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 6th annual Big Peach Slam Jam welcomed teams and states from across the US representing Varsity and Prep divisions. 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.

Peachtree Paragames

June 24-25th, 2022

The Peachtree Paragames is a multi-sport competitive event with a variety of divisions for the developmental to the elite paralympic athlete. Sports that were offered which included: archery, track and field, and swimming. This event was a great success, and we look forward to hosting the Paragames annually each summer.



Camp Phoenix

June 6th-11th, 2022

BlazeSports Camp Phoenix, located at Camp Twin Lakes in Winder GA, gives kids and teens with a physical disability, a chance to learn and participate in a variety of adaptive sports and recreational activities, while building leadership and self-advocacy skills, developing greater independence, and making lifelong friends

2022 Events



Third Annual Run, Row, & Roll 5K

August 6th, 2022

The Third Annual Run, Row, & Roll 5K, located in Norcross, is an event for participants to run, row, roll, swim, cycle, or crawl. The 5K included an adaptive division, rowing division, and age group divisions, as well as a fun run.

Blaze Day in the community

September 10th, 2022

In partnership with Georgia Southern, Blaze Day gave people the ability to try different adaptive sports through clinics where one could enhance their knowledge of a certain sport. Opportunities to try a new sport such as wheelchair basketball, tennis, lacrosse, cycling and yoga. Days were hosted in the community and schools



National ParaSport Conference

October 25-28th, 2022

Hosted by BlazeSports, this conference will consist of intensive courses in order for participants to be able to obtain our nationally recognized certifications in adaptive sports. The certifications that will be offered include CARSS Level 2 (Certified Adaptive Recreation Sport Specialist), CASC Certified Adaptive Sport Coaching, CARC Certified Adaptive Rowing Coach and CASI Certified Adaptive Swim Instructor. This event reflects how we can continue to grow and improve the ParaSport community for providers and athletes.



Triumph of the Human Spirit

November 3rd, 2022

The Triumph of the Human Spirit Awards honor those who have made a significant impact through adaptive sports and recreation. Those who inspire, motivate, and truly epitomize the Triumph of the Human Spirit. The awards presented were:

Organization Volunteer of the Year: **Atlanta Hawks**

Youth Athlete of the Year: **Sam Fraser**

Veteran Athlete of the Year: **Carlos Larry**

Volunteer of the Year: **Kelli Munkel**

Distinguished Service of the Year: **Daniel Holland**

Coach of the Year: **Jaccalyn Owens**



Athlete Accomplishments

Senior Spotlight 2022

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. The seniors have been a huge asset to BlazeSports and we thank them for all they have done for our organization.



Collin Lancaster

Collin has been with BlazeSports for 12 years since he was 6 years old. There is not a sport that he has not tried, participating in basketball, track and field, swimming, archery, and tennis. His favorite memory at Blaze are winning four straight prep National Championships and winning the 2022 Big Peach Slam Jam. Collin attends the University of Alabama playing wheelchair basketball and majoring in business analytics.

"Being a part of BlazeSports has allowed me to participate in sports and other activities that after I had my first injury, I didn't know I could do. It has been a second family for me; it has really helped me get back to doing the things I love."

- Collin



Abigail Coffin

Abigail has been with BlazeSports for a year in the wheelchair tennis and basketball programs. Blaze has given her the chance to develop her leadership skills on and off the court. Her biggest accomplishment is getting to play wheelchair basketball at the University of Arizona and major in rehabilitation studies and minor in sport and recreation. Her fondest memory with Blaze was when she tried wheelchair basketball at Camp Phoenix. Three words the best describe Abby are enthusiastic, adventurous, and diligent.



Taevan Grant

Taevan has been with BlazeSports since he was 6 years old. He participated in track, swimming, and wheelchair basketball programs. Blaze has given him the ability to build his confidence level, which helped him develop strong leadership skills. Three words that would best describe him are patient, trustworthy, and considerate. His fondest memory at Blaze was traveling and spending time with his teammates.

"BlazeSports has helped me grow as a person and to learn how to be comfortable with my disability. I felt more comfortable because I knew that I wasn't the only kid with a disability playing a sport. I am not an outcast, I had people who were just like me, this really helped me grow mentally."

- Taevan

Training & Education

Building Capacity in Adaptive Sport and Physical Activity Nationwide.

The BlazeSports America Certified Adaptive Recreation and Sports Specialist™

In 2022, BlazeSports hosted the 2022 National ParaSport Conference in Marietta, GA on October 25-28th. With attendees joining both virtually and in-person, we brought together industry leaders in ParaSport from across the country. This conference will consist of intensive courses in order for participants to be able to obtain our nationally recognized certifications in adaptive sports. The certifications that will be offered include CARSS Level 2 (Certified Adaptive Recreation Sport Specialist), CASC Certified Adaptive Sport Coaching, CARC Certified Adaptive Rowing Coach and CASI Certified Adaptive Swim Instructor. This event reflects how we can continue to grow and improve the ParaSport community for providers and athletes.



Training & Education

- New adaptive swimming certification coaching program
- T&E certifications are now at five. We will host a conference in October where five will be offered.



BlazeTOTS

BlazeTOTS is a BlazeSports initiative that aims to increase opportunities for preschoolers with disabilities to be physically active and eat healthy. 2022, marked the 2nd full year of the implementation of our BlazeTOTS program in the community and several important milestones were achieved this year.

Blazetots Impact Summary

- Serving **11 counties** across the state of Georgia
- Blazetots has **served over 574** disabled and/or low-income toddlers ages 2-6 through programs, specialized resources and education.
- **170** of the children served live in rural areas in South Georgia
- **210** of the children served are enrolled in Georgia Head Start
- **16 Early Childhood Development Center partnerships** across Georgia that receive our resources and training to help.
- Offered free or affordable community inclusive physical activity programs, to **33 toddlers in 2022-23** in metro Atlanta.
- Trained **45 early childhood teachers** on the importance of adaptive physical activity and nutrition education for children with disabilities between the ages of 2-6.

Training & Education



Youth LEAD

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

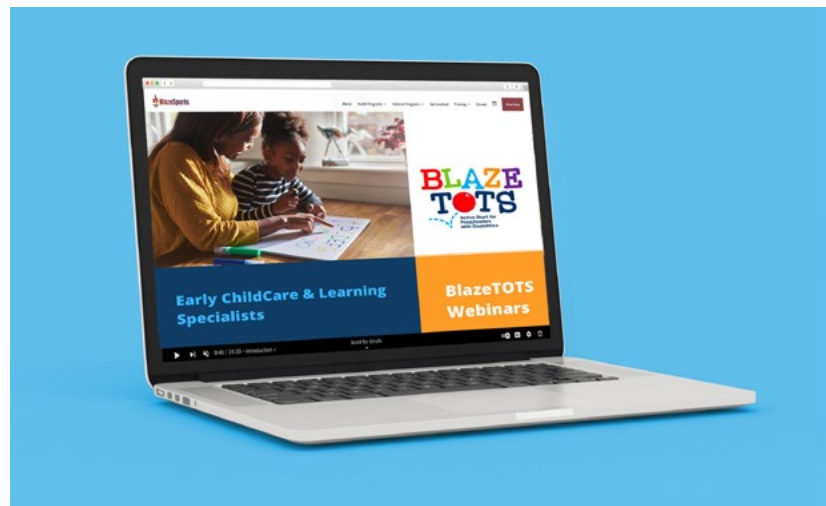
Youth LEAD is an initiative of BlazeSports aimed at helping prepare young people with physical disabilities for adulthood through the transformative power of sport.

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.

As part of the new board structure, we have added a new athlete council for our youth and veteran athletes to serve as a sounding board for BlazeSports planning, as well as, to give leadership opportunities and a voice to our athletes.

The board members for the 2022 are:

Collin Lancaster – basketball, tennis, wheelchair track
Tyler Brown – swimming
Jude Hiley – basketball, tennis
Samantha Fraser – basketball, tennis, ambulatory track
Abby Coffin – basketball, tennis
Zach Armas – basketball
Maggie Arnold – basketball, tennis, ambulatory track, swimming
Yan Babayuski – swimming



BlazeTots Webinars

- Parent & Families with Preschoolers- April 21st, 2022
- Early ChildCare & Learning Specialist- Tuesdays – April 19th-May 10th

Youth LEAD Webinars:

- Sports Psychologist Margret Smith- May 4th, 2022
- Financial Literacy- June 15th, 2022
- Navigating Employment- July 13th, 2022
- Sports Nutrition- September 21st, 2022
- Navigating Disability Services- Decemeber 14th, 2022



Youth & Veteran Programs

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

Member growth

Increase # of participants in BSA programs. We expanded the youth population by 40 new athletes which is more than a 40% increase in active participation. We added 150 new veterans, which represents approximately a 50% increase in active participants.

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
- Wheelchair Tennis

Youth Sport Clinics

- Youth Tennis Clinic
- Women & Girls Wheelchair Basketball Clinic
- Womens & Girls Adaptive Dance Clinic
- Womens & Girls Adaptive Tennis Clinic
- Womens Wheelchair Basketball Clinic
- Women & Girls Yoga Clinic
- Goalball Clinic
- Sitting Volleyball Clinic
- Rowing Clinic
- Crossfit Clinic

Youth Expansion

- Female only programs (CF, Tennis, BB, Yoga)
- Women's basketball team – Lady Ballers
- Toddler Dance Program and Toddler Swim program
- In-school program



Veteran Programs Offered Year-Round

- Archery
- Bowling
- Cross Fit
- Cycling
- Rowing
- Yoga
- Water Aerobics
- Tennis
- Air rifle
- Pickleball



Veteran Expansion

- 2022 we have added Pickle-ball, Military Camps and brought back out learn to swim program.
- We have added Air Rifle and expanded Cross Fit as part of the new VA grant.

BLAZESPORTS AMERICA LAUNCHES NEW LADY BALLERS

We are happy to announce the launch of our Women's Wheelchair Basketball team, the BlazeSports Lady Ballers, powered by the Atlanta Hawks. BlazeSports has started the first adaptive female basketball team in Georgia and one of the few teams in the country. Enabling girls and women with physical disabilities to compete and improve their fitness and grow through a program designed specifically to serve women of all ages. We are very thankful to everyone who donated and helped support us to implement this program for the women and girls in adaptive sport.

Thank You

To all our generous partners, funders, sponsors, and individual donors who supported BlazeSports programs and services throughout 2022. We are grateful!

Thank you to our sponsors:



2022

Financial Summary

Figures based on BlazeSports FY2022 Audited Financial Statements, Mersereau, Lazenby & Rockas LLC.

REVENUE AND OTHER SUPPORT

	WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS	WITH DONOR RESTRICTIONS	TOTAL
Contributions	\$131,331	\$0	\$131,331
Foundation Grants and Sponsors	\$84,448	\$48,107	\$132,555
Fees and other Revenue	\$64,680	\$0	\$64,680
State Grants	\$111,890	\$294,922	\$406,812
Government Grants	\$0	\$157,818	\$157,818
License Tags	\$14,608	\$0	\$14,608
Investment Income	\$729	\$0	\$729
Pandemic-related Income	\$0		\$0
Net Assets Released from Restriction – Satisfaction of Program Restrictions	\$501,645	(\$501,645)	--
Total Revenue and Other Support	\$909,331	(\$798)	\$908,533

EXPENSES

	WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS	WITH DONOR RESTRICTIONS	TOTAL
Program Services	\$642,749	\$0	\$657,138
Management and General	\$150,205	\$0	\$150,205
Fundraising	\$44,040	\$0	\$44,040
Total Expenses	\$851,383	\$0	\$851,383

	WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS	WITH DONOR RESTRICTIONS	TOTAL
Change in Net Assets	\$57,948	(\$798)	\$57,150
Net Assets, beginning of year	\$170,213	\$12,454	\$182,667
Net Assets, end of year	\$228,161	\$11,656	\$239,817



BlazeSports America

3000 Business Park Drive, Suite A
Norcross, GA 30071

📞 404-270-2000

✉️ info@blazesports.org

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.