

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

NWABA Makes Sports Happen Through Partnerships with Northwest Schools and Teachers

NWABA programs happen because of partnerships. Teaming with schools and community groups throughout the region has truly multiplied NWABA's ability to offer sports to blind and visually impaired students. One very strong partnership involves the Columbia Regional Program, which supports opportunities for Oregon students needing special services in Multnomah, Clackamas, Hood River and Wasco counties in collaboration with Portland Public Schools. David Cahill has helped cement that partnership with NWABA.

Experiencing sports for the first time

As an Orientation & Mobility Specialist who has taught for more than 30 years, David understands the hurdles facing his students. "I have always been interested in finding activities, especially recreation and leisure, for kids who are blind and visually impaired," he says. He saw the positive impact of sports while working at the Texas School for the Blind where they held an annual Helen Keller Track and Field event. When he moved to the Portland area in the 1990s, he learned about another kind of sport for his students—goalball.

"Recreation and leisure are really important for kids," David says. "It's just as important to kids who are visually impaired as everybody else, not just so they can get a workout but also so they can be a part of a team. Sometimes that means losing and working harder. You can parlay these skills later in life when you are in the workforce."



Columbia Regional Program takes second place at the 2012 Oregon Youth Goalball Tournament

"We are extremely fortunate to partner with countless teachers each year," says NWABA's Billy Henry. "David's dedication and enthusiasm for goalball and other programs has allowed his students to experience sports and build the confidence and self-esteem that they will need to be successful in other areas of life."

Partnerships ensure that all students have access to sports and recreation

"NWABA been fantastic! They really partner with the teachers of the visually impaired," David says. "Sports allow our students to really excel. I love to go to the Washington State School for the Blind for regional and state competitions for young adults. They are so good. It's similar to seeing the best athletes in baseball, football and basketball."

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Matt Hoffstetter introduces a student to bicycling.

Matt Hoffstetter

Some volunteers are passionate about sports. Others are naturals at working with young people. Still others are inspired by working with individuals with visual impairments. Luckily, NWABA found someone who is committed to all of the above in Matt Hoffstetter.

Matt, who is currently the Sales Director of Greater Vancouver Chamber of Commerce, was volunteering for the local Red Cross Youth Council when NWABA Director Billy Henry organized a goalball clinic for the Youth Council members, all with normal eyesight. "I found it really fascinating to see how quickly the kids took to Billy and admired him," Matt remembers. "What really struck me was the kids' interaction with Billy. It meant a lot to them. I thought, 'We should figure out a way that we can help Billy and NWABA do what he is doing.'" That was just the beginning of Matt's volunteer career with NWABA.

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LET'S STAY IN TOUCH

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NWABA Makes Sports Happen Through Partnerships with Northwest Schools and Teachers

David remembers a blind student who tried to play whatever sport his sighted friends were playing. When he was introduced to goalball he quickly excelled, is now in a college prep program and plays goalball with young adults. They recently medaled at an event. "If he had vision, he would probably be a running back in football. It's a really important part of his life," says David. "It also gave him greater contact with the blind community-at-large. I think it's important for people who are blind to have the support of each other. They understand. It's a commonality. And he has found a challenging athletic sport that it is very satisfying to him where he can excel."

"I think there will always be folks who would much prefer pursuing music or chess club but we should never assume that because people are visually impaired they are not interested in athletics," David says. "A lot of students were somewhat timid about getting involved with goalball or track and field. Once they realized that they had peers, it made it more comfortable. It allows them to compete against somebody. They often don't have those same opportunities."

They don't have to be future athletes - they might be lawyers or teachers

"I have had a number of students that I'm so glad right now that I could get them involved with sports. There is a huge social component," David says. "They don't have to be future athletes. They might be lawyers or teachers. It is important now that they have this experience."

"I have learned at much from my students as they have learned from me. It should be a reminder that they are able to accomplish an awful lot given their challenges. We, too, can remember that when we are faced with a struggle. There are ways of working on things and improving and finding some level of success."

"I'm very excited that we have an organization like NWABA to provide these opportunities for our students," David says. And NWABA is extremely pleased to have such a strong partnership with David and other teachers who are introducing their students to the joys and lessons of sports.

“

It's just as important to kids who are visually impaired as everybody else, not just so they can get a workout but also so they can be a part of a team. Sometimes that means losing and working harder. You can parlay these skills later in life when you are in the workforce.

”

- DAVID CAHILL

Dinner & Auction Raises \$100,000!

On February 1st, over 350 community members gathered at the Hilton Vancouver, Washington to help raise \$100,000 net to support Northwest Association for Blind Athlete's mission and programs for individuals who are blind and visually impaired. Thank you to everyone who generously supported this event!

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February 28th, 2015

Benefit Dinner & Auction

Hilton Vancouver,
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Lions, Rebels and Wolverines Score Big at the Oregon Goalball State Championships

On February 28th, Northwest Association for Blind Athletes (NWABA) partnered with Northwest Regional ESD, the Blind and Visually Impaired Student Fund and Baker Prairie Middle School to host the Oregon Youth Goalball State Championship Tournament at Baker Prairie Middle School in Canby, OR.

Goalball is a Paralympic sport played by individuals who are blind and visually impaired. Developed after WWII as a way to keep blinded veterans physically active, it has become one of the premiere team sports for people who are blind and visually impaired. Played competitively by men and women, it is a very fast paced, physically challenging, strategic and overall an exciting game to watch.

Teams traveled from across Oregon and Southwest Washington to compete for the coveted Champion's Cup. The competition was heated throughout the day, but in the end, the team from WSSB took home the 2014 championship title.

Each team practiced for months leading up to the Tournament. These types of events provide students the opportunity to have fun, build confidence, increase overall physical fitness and strive towards a goal. We would like to thank all of the participants, coaches, and volunteers for helping to make this amazing event possible for our athletes.

... **RESULTS** ...

- 1st **WSSB Lions**
- 2nd **WESD Rebels**
- 3rd **LBLESD Wolverines**



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*This list reflects donations received from July 1st, 2013-March 25th, 2014

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Changing lives on a tandem bicycle

At first Matt took on logistical jobs, setting up goalball courts. “I was a non-skilled volunteer,” he says. Then Matt observed a Paralympics Experience clinic which featured multiple sports—goalball, tandem bikes and judo—in the Seattle area. That is when NWABA tapped into his true love – bicycling. “I gave an 11-year-old girl a tandem bike ride and she was scared. At first she wanted to slow down. Before the ride was over, she wanted to race her friends. I thought that was one of the most rewarding experiences of my life.”

Matt has observed the metamorphosis of many athletes at NWABA clinics. “I was impressed with how parents were with Billy and how he related to even the most timid of athletes,” he says. “Some were horribly shy and you could tell they didn’t want to be there. Billy talked to them and walked them through the whole thing. One kid was hiding behind his dad. By the end of the clinic the students were transformed.”



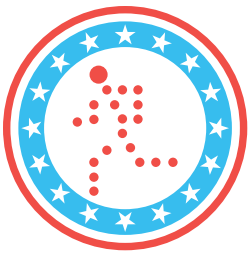
I thought that was one of the most rewarding experiences of my life.



Matt continues to assist with clinics and joined more than 100 volunteers at the 2013 National Goalball Tournament in Vancouver, WA last June. “Those kids at the tournament were tremendous athletes,” he remembers. “Matt always goes above and beyond as a volunteer,” says Billy Henry. “He has been instrumental in supporting our programs since 2011. Matt has helped with setting-up for goalball, running Paralympic Experiences across the region, and assisted with the planning of our auctions. He has a great sense of humor and is always willing to take on tasks that others don’t always want to do.”

“It’s so rewarding,” Matt says. “Kids get their confidence raised tremendously. It’s different at every clinic. For someone who has never ridden a bike, it can be life-changing. Billy is building a team of mentors for some of these younger kids who are wondering what their lives are going to look like.”

“I think honestly Billy has shown these kids that there are no limitations,” he says. “Sometimes you might need to modify things a bit but really they can do anything. For the kids who are visually impaired they think, ‘I can do whatever I want. I just need to work through any hurdles.’” Thank you, Matt, for helping to ensure that students who are blind or visually impaired are gaining confidence and skills that will last a lifetime.



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**Multnomah Athletic Club
Portland, Oregon**

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