

MIAMI-DADE PARKS DISABILITY SERVICES

Newsletter
January 2012

Swimmers Take Gold While Others Look to London.

During the Junior Orange Bowl Sports Ability Swimming competition on Dec. 2, 2011, four young men from our swim program for youth with physical disabilities won 14 gold medals. The four boys are:

- *Miguel –Angel Caballero-Perez, age 16, class CP5, won the 25 yd and 50 yd freestyle, 25 yd and 50yd breaststroke
- *Brian Douglas, age 8, class amputee 1, won the 25 yd and 50 yd freestyle, and 25 yd back and 25 yd breaststroke
- *Bryan Atorresagasti, age 7, class amputee 9, won the 25 yd free, back and breaststroke
- *Seth Reyes, age 9, class CP7, won the 25yd free, back and breaststroke.

These young men swim on Saturday mornings at AD Barnes pool in our swim program for youth with physical disabilities. For more information or to register for the program, please call Belinda Phillips at 305-752-4966.

In other swimming news, hometown Paralympic swimming hopeful, Ileana Rodriguez has her

eyes set on the London 2012 Paralympic Games. Ileana has been training at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, CO for the last two years. She currently holds the American record for the 200 Breaststroke, class SB5. Ileana has been a strong supporter of our programs, coming out to cheer on our juniors at practice or competition whenever possible. She is hoping to make Team USA this June during the Paralympic Swim Trials. Go Ileana! We are very proud of you.



Miguel-Angel Caballero-Perez, Brian Douglas, Bryan Atorresagasti, and Seth Reyes at the Jr. Orange Bowl Games.

Biggest 50/50 Raffle to date!

This year's Parks Disability Services annual United Way 50/50 Raffle raised \$759 which will directly benefit the Leisure Access Foundation. The total money collected was \$1518.00! This was the biggest pot collected to date and the winner, Anthony Carrazana, a teenager who at-

tends Felix Varela Sr. High and has been skating at Westwind Lakes Park for the past two years, walked away with another \$759 in his pocket! Anthony purchased his raffle ticket when he attended a Halloween party at Westwind Lakes. Park. When asked what he was going to

do with all that money, Anthony stated, "I'm buying a good Christmas gift for my mom and the rest I am going to save". Congratulations Anthony!



We've Moved!
Parks Disability Services Administrative offices have moved! Our new phone number is **305-755-7848**. Our new address is 275 NW 2nd Street, Miami, FL, 33128.



Name Change

Miami-Dade Parks and Recreation is now called Miami-Dade Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces (MDPROS) or Miami Dade Parks for short. Our division remains Parks Disability Services.

Participants and Staff “Deliver Excellence” at MDPROS Showcase

December 6th through 8th, 2011, the MDPROS Department held a showcase in the lobby of the Stephen P. Clark Center in Downtown Miami. The showcase highlighted all the wonderful parks and programs offered throughout the Department by bringing the “outside-in” and allowing other county employees and people passing through the Government Center with the opportunity to experience Miami-Dade Parks firsthand.

One of the highlights of the showcase were the performances done by partici-

pants from the Adult Day Training program at the Leisure Access Center. Dressed in blue and pink t-shirts they created to represent the era of the 1950’s, the participants drew in the biggest audience of the entire showcase and left everyone in applause.

Some of the highlight performances included a dance duet to the song, “You’re the One that I Want”, by Lillian Vega and Rafael Llanes and a grand finale by the whole group who sang “Feliz Navidad”.



Participants and staff from the Leisure Access Center perform a dance routine to the song “Grease Lightning”.

Goulds Out-of-School Program Gets a Grant for Equine Assisted Therapy



Natasha Molina rides her horse during one of the sessions.

Through a generous grant provided by the Good Hope Equestrian Center located in the Redlands, children with disabilities in the Out-of-School program at Goulds Park will participate in ten therapeutic horseback riding sessions during the school year.

The participants learn how to ride and control a horse, how to care for and groom a horse, and proper terminology used when talking about horses or equipment.

“It’s been amazing to see how some of the children have just flourished in the pro-

gram”, said Jody Cox, CTRS, manager of the program at Goulds. “Some of the children who normally don’t engage in activities initiate contact with the horses. Another one of our participants who has significant spasticity in his legs is able to relax so well by riding the horse, we are able to stretch his legs afterwards. The benefits of this program are endless and I am really glad we had the opportunity to bring our participants to this program”.

Soccer Program Helps Child with Autism

Getting children physically active and teaching them how to play a sport or interact with peers can often be a challenge when working with children with Autism. For one particular child, patience, routine, and the dedication of Parks Disability staff have paid off

Andres Zamora, age 6, is young boy living with Autism who up until this past fall had never been able to run or even kick a ball. His Father Mario tells us how “Andres has learned to focus, follow directions, model his peers, socialize and even understand the concept to kick the ball into the goal”.

Soccer is one of the sports offered in the Autism Sports Program. Staff work with children in breaking the components of the sports down into single activities or skill sets which are taught through drills. As participants learn skills, staff are able to chain the skills together so that participants can play together, fostering independence and socialization. Programs such as these are valuable in combating the fight against childhood obesity in children with Autism especially when very few similar programs exist.

Other sports offered include baseball



The Fall 2011 Autism Sports Soccer team with Parks Disability staff Arlene Bouza-Jou, Recreation Specialist and Jennifer Rivero, Recreation Leader.

and basketball. For more information on the Autism Sports Program and upcoming sessions, please call Arlene Bouza-Jou at 302-222-2128.

Youth Arts in the Park Program Displays Young Artists' Talents

It was a beautiful Saturday afternoon in December at Fairchild Tropical Gardens and the grounds teemed with young, aspiring artists, eager to show off their art work at the Youth Arts in the Park culminating event. Parents had the opportunity to see all the wonderful work children enrolled in the program completed ranging from clay sculptures, paintings, to a beautiful three-dimensional floral display created as a group project.

The fully inclusive pilot art program, a partnership between Miami Dade Parks, Miami-Dade Department of Cultural

Affairs, and Arts for Learning is fully inclusive and strives to expose children with and without disabilities to various forms of artistic media. Young artists are encouraged to explore all the possibilities their minds can create.

The program was such a success and the need for such programs exists that there are waiting lists for upcoming classes.

If you would like more information on upcoming classes, please call Arts for Learning at 305-576-1212.



Jody Cox, CTRS stands with Ivan Corvea, one of the young artists, and his sister during the Fairchild Exhibit culminating event.

Goalball Helps Player "See" New Opportunities

Dan Johnson, a 51-year old chief turbine inspector who studied at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, has had to re-learn how he does virtually everything from crossing a street to finding his own house. He lost his vision when his eyes were infected by an Acanthamoeba through his contact lenses in December of

2010. He told us, "We take for granted our sight". Now that he is blind he says, "You have no choice but to think differently...to think without sight". And that is exactly what he has done.

Dan, who played softball three times a week and basketball every weekend was introduced to Goalball by a fellow goalball player, Jean Baptiste, who he met at the Miami Lighthouse for the Blind, and has been faithfully coming out to every practice. "I love sports...if I can't get on a court or play something, I would rather not live". Being a part of the Goalball program has increased Dan's awareness of athletic opportunities for individuals who

are blind or visually impaired and has given him the adrenaline rush he got through playing sports. He stated he enjoys blocking the most, although he is quickly becoming one of the team's greatest offensive threats.

"I want to be the best that I can. I have the 'Eye of the Tiger' drive". When asked about his future goals, Dan told us that he wants to get back into the workforce and travel with the Goalball team in 2013.

His advice to young people living with a disability, "Hold onto your dreams. Everything is possible no matter what disability you may have or what people say you can't do".

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-Dan Johnson

Miami Heat Wheels Take 1st Place in Sunrise Suns Invitational Tournament

The gym was filled with excitement on January 7th and 8th as the Miami Heat Wheels newest neighbor, the Sunrise Suns, held their first invitational wheelchair basketball tournament in Sunrise, FL. Those in attendance included the mayor of the City of Sunrise as well as Dwyane Wade's father. Teams participating in the event included the Sunrise Suns (home), the Miami Heat Wheels, the Tampa Bay Strongdogs and the Orlando Magic Wheels.

The Miami Heat Wheels took first place in

the tournament beating out the number one seeded team, the Tampa Bay Strongdogs, scoring 48-41 in the final game.

A big thanks goes out to the Sunrise Suns and the City of Sunrise for hosting an awesome event!

We would also like to congratulate Miami Heat Wheels team captain, Luis Amaro, on being selected to represent the team at the NWBA All-Star games to be held in Orlando, FL this February. Go Luis!



The Miami Heat Wheels with the Sunrise Suns before a game.

Inclusion and Accessibility to the MDPROS System

Miami Dade Parks is committed to including children and adults with disabilities in general park programs. General recreation staff participate annually in Inclusion Training to reinforce their skills and Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialists are on hand to assist when needed. If you are interested in participating in a program and feel you may need an accommodation, please call the Parks Disability Services Administrative office at 305-755-7848.

In striving to make our Park system as accessible to persons with disabilities as possible, we have the following equipment for use by persons with disabilities at no charge.

Pool Lifts are located at all Miami-Dade Parks Pools.

Beach Wheelchairs are located at Crandon (call 786-336-6982) and Haulover (call 786-336-6990) Beaches.

Single Rider Golf Carts are located at Country Club of Miami (305-829-8456) and Palmetto Golf (305-235-1069) courses. The carts can be transported to any County Course by calling either of these courses and requesting the cart in advance.

We are always interested in hearing from persons with disabilities about our services and their needs. Please feel free to contact us with suggestions and comments at the Parks Disability Services Office, 305-755-7848.

Upcoming Events & Programs...

February 25th

Family Festival of Arts & Games

For Children enrolled in Parks Out-of-School program and Villa Lyan. Kendall Indian Hammocks Park, 11am to 2pm

Call 305-222-2128 for more info.

March 10th

2012 Paralympic Experience

Tropical Park, 10am to 2pm

Call 305-234-1673 or 305-752-4966 for more info.

March 12th-16th

Spring Break Camps

March 15th

Next Adult Swimming session begins

AD Barnes Park, 10am to 1pm

Call 305-7524966 for more info.

March 19th

-Summer Camp Registration begins!

Water Exercise classes begin at

Larry & Penny Thompson Pool, 305-234-1673

March 24th

Autism Sports: Baseball

AD Barnes Park, 10am to 12pm

PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED.

Call 305-222-2128 for more info.

Next Youth Swimming session begins

AD Barnes Park, 10-11am, 11am-12pm

Call 305-7524966 for more info.

April 14th-June 16th

Jr. Wheelchair Tennis

Call 305-752-4966 for more info.

Contact Us

Lucy Binhack, CTRS, MPA 305-755-7848

Disability Services Supervisor/Manager

Disability Services Administration

Kim Fowler, CTRS 305-945-3425

Recreation Therapist II

Greynolds Park Out-of-School Program for *CWD
Center for Independent Living Community Program

Celia Leyva 305-226-1622

Recreation Specialist II

Coral Estates Out-of-School Program for CWD

Arlene Bouza-Jou 305-222-2128

Recreation Specialist

Tamiami Park Out-of-School Program
Autism Sports Program, Water Exercise

Gisel Prado, CTRS 305-665-5319

Recreation Therapist II

Adult Day, Special Olympics, Saturday in the Park and Fun of Friday Programs at the Leisure Access Center

Belinda Phillips, CTRS 305-752-4966

Recreation Therapist II

Camp Matecumbe Out-of-School Program for CWD, Swimming, Jr. Wheelchair Tennis

Diana Bonet 305-380-9106

Recreation Specialist

Westwind Lakes Out-of-School Program for CWD
Wheelchair Basketball, Wheelchair Tennis

Jody Cox, CTRS 305-234-1673

Recreation Therapist II

Goulds Out-of-School Program for CWD
Goalball, Handcycling, Youth Arts Program

* Children with Disabilities