

December 2008



Leisure Access Services

Park and Recreation services for people with disabilities

The Leisure Access Foundation: Changing the world, one athlete at a time

Contact Information

Leisure Access Administration

7300 Crandon Blvd
305-365-3128
305-365-6705 (TDD)

AD Barnes

3401 SW 72 Ave.
305-665-5319
305-669-4052 (TDD)

Coral Estates Park

1405 SW 97 Ave.
305-226-1622
305-222-2128 (TDD)

Goulds Park

11350 SW 216 St.
305-234-1673
305-234-1712 (TDD)

Greynolds Park

17530 W. Dixie Highway
305-945-3425

Camp Matecumbe

13841 SW 120 St.
305-752-4966
305-385-6230 (TDD)

Tamiami Park

11201 SW 24 St.
305-222-2128
305-222-2175 (TDD)

Westwind Lakes

6805 SW 152 Ave.
305-380-9106

Paralympic Sports

305-752-4966/
305-385-6230 (TDD)



The Leisure Access Foundation (LAF) is 501 (c)(3) not -for-profit agency. It was created in 1991 to improve opportunities for persons with disabilities to participate in sports programs. Running a sports program can be very expensive. Many of these programs require special instruction as well as wheelchairs and other equipment. Because of the expense that comes with participating in these programs, many athletes are not able to do so. LAF funds many of these expenses. Leisure Access Services currently runs three programs that are mostly funded through the Foundation.

These programs include Wheelchair Basketball, Wheelchair Tennis, and Goalball (a sport for people with visual impairments). LAF also funds Adapted Sports Clinics. These clinics take place with Miami Dade County Public Schools to allow Recreational Therapists to teach Special Education Students how to use adaptive equipment and how to play adapted sports. The goals of LAF are:

1) Provide additional quality recreation/sports programs for persons with disabilities, 2) Work with Leisure Access Services, Miami-Dade Parks, and other organizations serving persons with disabilities to hold events and create programs, 3) Fund special adaptive equipment needs for these programs,

4) Train volunteers to assist in implementing events and programs, and 5) Hold annual fundraising events to fund activities. The foundation runs solely on donations. If you would like to help, there are three ways to do so: 1) volunteer at one of the events or programs, 2) In-kind donations of sports/recreation equipment, t-shirts, food for events, etc., or 3) Monetary donations. For additional information, please contact Beatriz Reynaldos at 305-365-3175/ 305-365-6705 (TDD) or by email bperez@miamidadegov.



Pictures: (above left: Basketball athlete Josue Ortiz , middle right: Wheelchair Tennis athlete Nexon Louis, bottom left: Goalball athlete Nathaniel Hobbes)

Miami-Dade Parks helps students with exceptionalities succeed in the workforce

Miami-Dade Parks is currently participating in two programs for students with disabilities. Project Victory is designed to help students develop social, emotional, and employability skills required to succeed in the work force. Many organizations throughout Dade County aid in the development of these training skills by allowing students to work at their sites. This school year, Metro Zoo is one of these organizations. Every day, these students go to the Zoo four hours a day to learn about different job positions available there. Project BRIDGE is similar to Victory. It serves the same purpose, except this project primarily focuses on outdoor or recreation jobs. For the last three months, students that are involved in this project attended different parks in Miami Dade. During these visits, the staff at the sites gave the students a brief orientation on what their job is like. They visited The Deering Estate, Pelican Harbor Marina, Matheson Hammock, Country Club of Miami, and AD Barnes Pool & Nature Center. A big thank you goes to MD Parks staff for participating in these projects.



Students from Project B.R.I.D.G.E. learn about jobs in the golf course from golf pro Larry Levow at Country Club of Miami



Jesus Santander with his proud mother, Margarita Santander

Leisure Access Champion 2008, Jesus Santander

Jesus Santander is a participant at the Leisure Access Center's Adult Day Training program. During the "Breakfast of Champions" Jesus was nominated as the "Champion" of Leisure Access for 2008. This is a yearly event sponsored by CCDH in which various agencies nominate their "champions" and the nominees received a public acknowledgment during a wonderful and heart warming event. Jesus was nominated for all his accomplishments during this year. He shows great enthusiasm during sports activities and enjoys interacting with his peers. His favorite sport is basketball and he loves to dance. Jesus' Mom, Maggie, accompanied him and Leisure Access staff during the breakfast. Jesus had the opportunity to have a special breakfast with his Mom and an acknowledged in front of his peers as he received a beautiful plaque with his picture and a bag of "goodies". We are champions EVERY day but this was a special day for Jesus.

Written by: Celia Leyva

ZOT Art tools facilitate Inclusion

Leisure Access Services (LAS) hosted three inclusion events using the recently purchased ZOT art tools. ZOT art tools are adaptive equipment that were created to help people with physical disabilities create beautiful artwork. These events were held at different sites throughout Miami Dade Parks to include Highland Oaks Park, Miller Drive Park, and Kendale Lakes Park. General camp participants were invited to create art with these tools together with children with disabilities from Leisure Access camps. LAS would like to thank Park Managers at the participating sites. We look forward to holding more events and inviting more parks sites to participate. For information on ZOT art tools or on how to take part in one of these events, please call Beatriz at 305-365-3175/ 305-365-6705



RECOGNITIONS COME TO LEISURE ACCESS SERVICES

What a great inspiration!

Patricia Neal once said "A strong positive mental attitude will create more miracles than any wonder drug." Leisure Access Staff Avery Coats has been like that "wonder drug" for the Special Olympics athletes. His unconditional dedication and effort was acknowledged as he was nominated as the Inspirational Coach from Dade County during the 2008 State Fall Classic.

written by: Celia Leyva



In May 2008, Leisure Access staff member Mariacarmen Vazquez was recognized twice. On May 7, she was recognized with an appreciation certificate from Mayor Carlos Alvarez for her job in The Senior Talent Showcase event created to honor seniors who have served as role models. On May 31st, she was recognized with a certificate of appreciation by Commissioner Joe A. Martinez, district 11, for her valuable contributions to the First Annual Senior Art Exhibition "Creative Golden Visions 2008".

written by: Gisel Prado

Leisure Access Services Disability Services Manager, Lucy Binhack, was the Miami-Dade Parks Supervisor of the Quarter April-June 2008. A well deserved honor for Lucy who has shown true dedication to Leisure Access since she began working for Parks in 1993.



Leisure Access would like to congratulate their staff members who recently passed their exam to become Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist. Congratulations Ingrid Berges, Hallie Hodge, and Sara Tosado.



Athlete Eric Barrow accompanied his coach, Avery Coats, when receiving his award.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE THROUGH VOLUNTEERISM

Trishell Morrison has been volunteering for Leisure Access Services (LAS) for about two years. She assists LAS staff at Tamiami Park during the after school program. Growing up with Cerebral Palsy and Aphasia, Trishell has a special connection with the children she works with. Due to the obstacles she faced when she was a child, she understands what the children face and she feels that recreation is very important for a person with a disability. Trishell always knew she wanted to help children make the most of their lives. That is why she chose to volunteer for this program. She enjoys LAS because she gets a chance to work with a variety of recreational activities as well as varying exceptionalities. Trishell likes to tell the children she works with to never let their disability get in the way of what they want to do. She says " Some people told me I wasn't a candidate to drive, but I received my driver's license anyways. Some people told me I wasn't college material, but I received my Bachelor's Degree in Recreational Therapy and I was on the Dean's list. As for sports, I haven't let anything get in my way. I have gone surfing, sit down water skiing, scuba diving, and rock climbing. I've learned that children with disabilities can do more with a little encouragement and determination, so I want to be the one to give the children the encouragement they need to be more able". If you or someone you know would like to make a difference, like Trishell has, by volunteering for Leisure Access Services, please call 305-365-3128/ 305-365-6705 (TDD).



Trishell Morrison (above right) with some of the participants from Tamiami Park afterschool program at the Miami Seaquarium

In the Spotlight: Jody Cox



Jody Cox, CTRS, is a Recreation Therapist II for Leisure Access Services (LAS). She is currently one of the therapists in charge of the Disability Sports programs. Jody has been employed by Miami-Dade County Parks and Recreation since April 2004. She graduated from Florida International University in December 1995 with a B.S. in Parks and Recreation Management with an emphasis in Therapeutic Recreation and has been a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist since May 1996. Jody's first experience with LAS was when she completed an internship rotation in the summer of 1994. Upon graduating from FIU, she was offered a position as a Recreational Therapist at Baptist HealthSouth where she primarily worked the pediatric, spinal cord injury and brain injury populations. After 10 years in the clinical setting, Jody made the decision to transition to community Recreational Therapy because she felt she had reached a point in her career where she wanted to do something new and totally different. Two weeks after making this decision, she saw an ad in the paper for Miami Dade Parks LAS. Some major accomplishments she has made since being employed by MD Parks include starting an after school program in Westwind Lakes Park and taking the initiative and lead in having MD Parks become recognized as a BlazeSports America Club and a US Paralympic Club. Jody is also responsible for opening two programs for individuals with physical disabilities: the Jr. Wheelchair Sports Club and a Power Soccer program. One of Jody's dreams has always been to dedicate most of her attention to the development of wheelchair sports. We are happy she is able to fulfill this dream here at Miami Dade Parks.

Paralympic Partners Progress

Paralympic Partners, a group of local organizations dedicated to improving participation in sports and recreation by persons with physical and/or visual disabilities had its third meeting in November. At the first three meetings, the Partners have clarified the group's mission and focused on several specific goals. To this end, three committees have been created. The Transportation Committee is working on the challenge of getting both adult and children participants to events, programs and competitions. The Event Committee is working on establishing two annual events; one water-based and one land-based. The Registration Committee is developing a process to create, store and maintain a database of persons with physical and/or visual disabilities who are interested in participating in sports and recreation. All Partner organizations should try to have a member on at least one committee. The Committee Chairs and their contact information are below. Just give them a call if you are interested in assisting on one of these important committees. The next Paralympic Partners meeting is on January 15, 2pm at Shake-A-Leg, 2600 Bayshore Drive, 3rd floor balcony. All committees will meet in December and report at the January meeting.

Transportation Committee Chair: Ryan Hamlet, 305-858-5550

Events Committee Chair: Jody Cox, 305-752-4966

Registration Committee Chair: Ingrid Berges, 305-752-4966

Wheelchair Tennis

Looking for something to do on Saturday mornings? Join us for wheelchair tennis. Whether you are a novice or an expert, you can practice every Saturday morning at the Big Five Club, 600 SW 92nd Ave. The program is free and it is available for anyone age 16 and up who uses a wheelchair. For more information contact Belinda Phillips at 305-752-4966/ 305-385-6230 (TDD).



Winter Camp for children with disabilities

Leisure Access will hold their annual Winter Camp Program from December 22, 2008-January 2, 2009. This program is funded through The Children's Trust. The programs will be held at 6 sites throughout Miami Dade County. Children will participate in activities such as sports, art & crafts, literacy, field trips, and much more. For

further information, please contact one of our sites listed on the first page of this newsletter or our administrative office at 305-365-3128/305-365-6705 (TDD).

