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Youngsters with disabilities to experience Paralympic athlete training

Chicago, IL – Youngsters with physical and visual disabilities will find out what it is like to be a Paralympic athlete at the 2009 Chicago Paralympic Academy and GoGirlGo! event, Saturday, May 9 at Chicago State University’s Jacoby Dickens Physical and Education and Athletic Center, from noon to 4 p.m. The event is sponsored by the Great Lakes Adaptive Sports Association (GLASA) in conjunction with U.S. Paralympics, a division of the U.S. Olympic Committee, and the Women’s Sports Foundation.

The Paralympic Academy and GoGirlGo! event is aimed at introducing and expanding the sports of track and field for those youths with physical and visual disabilities. “It provides a great opportunity for these kids to be exposed to new opportunities as well as have those already involved take their skills to the next level,” said Keri Schindler, GLASA Program Supervisor.

The Chicago Paralympic Academy and GoGirlGo! event will introduce students with physical disabilities and visual impairments, ages 6-21, to Paralympic sports. In addition to hands-on participation in track and field the students will interact with Paralympic athletes and coaches.

The event will bring together youngsters from all of the Chicagoland area in hopes of getting more youth with physical and visual disabilities involved in sports and recreation opportunities. It is central to the mission of GLASA, U.S. Paralympics and the Women’s Sports Foundation that these young people are provided with the opportunities to be healthy and active individuals.

“The Paralympic Academy program encourages physical fitness and overall well-being in children with physical disabilities and visual impairments, and we are thrilled to be working with GLASA on this initiative,” said Charlie Huebner, USOC Chief of Paralympics. “Research shows that youth with physical disabilities who participate in physical activity are healthier, more successful in school and have an enhanced quality of life.”

“We are happy to host this event on campus, providing a college atmosphere for these students and encouraging them to continue their studies post high school,” said Robert J. Szyman, Ph.D., assistant professor for the department of Health, Physical Education and Recreation. “It will also provide Chicago State University physical education teacher candidates and recreation majors with opportunities to learn about the Paralympic movement and the people it serves through real world teaching and coaching,” he added.

Paralympic Academies are being held in communities throughout the country. For registration information on the May 9 Chicago event, visit www.glasa.org or call (847) 283-0908. Participation is free and open to any youth ages 6-21 with a physical or visual impairment.

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About Great Lakes Adaptive Sports Association (GLASA)
GLASA provides integrative recreational and competitive sports activities for youth, teens and adults who have a primary physical or visual disability.
Contact us: www.glasa.org (847) 283-0908.