

ADVANCEMENTS IN MOBILITY

3
FACTS

ON ACCESSIBILITY
IN AMERICA TODAY

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Young athletes partner with the Challenged Athletes Foundation to build confidence through athletic competition

INSPIRATION

FACT

2

CHALLENGED ATHLETES FOUNDATION GAVE OVER \$1.3 MILLION DOLLARS IN GRANTS THIS YEAR



PHOTO: CHALLENGED ATHLETES FOUNDATION



NEWS

Wounded Warrior Project

One night while watching the evening news, a group of veterans were moved by the difficult stories of the first wounded service members returning home from Afghanistan and Iraq. They realized that something needed to be done for these brave individuals beyond the brass bands and ticker tape parades.

Thus began the Wounded Warrior Project (WWP), an organization that honors and empowers severely injured soldiers. By raising awareness and enlisting public support for the needs of wounded warriors, WWP unites these service members and provides unique programs and services to meet their needs. "These men and women are true American heroes," said Steve Nardizzi, executive director.

One such program is Soldier Ride, which provides adaptive cycling events across the country for wounded warriors to restore their physical and emotional well-being. All participants with a disability or amputation are provided the adaptive equipment customized to their individual needs.

To get involved and learn more, visit woundedwarriorproject.org.

Turning challenges into opportunities

Question: How can children with mobility challenges build confidence and hit their stride?

Answer: The Challenged Athletes Foundation enables them to be competitive athletes.

Brendan Driscoll was born with a tibia and a fibula that did not develop; his lower left leg was amputated before he started kindergarten. While he could use a prosthetic leg to walk, his heart was set on running.

A few years ago, The Challenged Athletes Foundation (CAF), a San Diego-based nonprofit, gave him a running leg. Now 12, Brendan is an accomplished athlete, having participated in 14 races in 19 states.

"Before I met The Challenged Athletes Foundation, I thought I couldn't run as fast as kids at school, but now I'm faster than most of them," says the middle school student from Essex, Mass.

CAF's mission is to provide grants,

support, and training to enable individuals with physical challenges to live active lives.

"The grant program funds prosthetics, hand cycles, basketball chairs—any equipment or coaching to get to the next level," says Lauren Hinton, director of marketing for CAF, which started in 1994 and has given out 812 grants this year totaling over \$1.3 million.

"Brendan is a great example of how sports can help you rise above," says Hinton. "He's doing more than most able-bodied kids."

Ginger Driscoll, Brendan's mother, says CAF changed her son and the family's life.

"The Challenged Athletes Foundation shows us that you can do things you didn't think you could do," she says.

Pricey prosthetics

Without CAF, Brendan and his family couldn't afford a running leg,



Kevin Messner



Brendan Driscoll

which he outgrows about every six months.

Hinton says prices for running legs range from \$12,000 to \$120,000.

Last year, Brendan joined the Amputee Coalition of America as they went to Capitol Hill to lobby for the Prosthetic & Customized Orthotic Parity Act, a bill requiring insurance companies to pay for prosthetics and devices.

"Insurance companies don't cover running legs and most prosthetics," he says. "I went to talk about how you need running legs to do everyday activities."

Brendan has raised over \$20,000 for CAF's "Race for a Reason" campaign to support

challenged athletes worldwide.

Breaking barriers

Another challenged athlete, Kevin Messner, 10, of Phoenix had his right leg amputated above the knee when he was four due to a congenital birth defect. He's been running races for the past three years after receiving a running leg from CAF.

"Kevin is very shy and sport is helping him break down barriers," says Hinton.

Kyle Messner, Kevin's mother, says, "CAF has taken my son where I hoped he'd go. I think someday he'll be running in the Paralympics. He likes to run, to win, and to beat his times."

Kevin says his new leg helped him shave 15 seconds off his 200 meter time. "I get better at running every year," he says. "It feels good."

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