PROMOTING INCLUSION AND WELL-BEING THROUGH SPORT AND RECREATION: CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION?

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Daemen College
There is ample evidence to support the idea that sport and/or recreational activities have positive effects on the lives of children, youth, and young adults.
PHYSICAL HEALTH BENEFITS

- Healthy Growth and Development
- Stronger Bones, Muscles, and Joints (especially Heart)
- Brain Development (Growth in Hippocampus aids in Learning/Memory)
- Better Posture and Balance
- Improved Motor Skills (Hand-Eye Coordination)
- Healthier Weight Range
- Improved Sleep and Energy Levels
MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS

- Improved Mood
- Improved Body Image
- Greater Self-Esteem
- Self-Worth (especially for Girls)
- Resilience through Winning and Losing
- Decreased Depression, Anxiety, and Loneliness
- Sense of Well-Being
EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS

- Improved Attendance at School
- Connection to School Subjects (especially Math and Science)
- Learning New Skills While Having Fun
- Better Focus and Concentration During School
- Improved Thinking and Memory
- Greater Problem Solving Ability
SOCIAL BENEFITS

- Developing Rapport with Others
- Extra-Familial Experiences
- Fostering Friendships
- Greater Confidence
- Work Towards Common Goal (Teamwork)
- Socialization
Despite these clear benefits, young people with disabilities are frequently excluded from school and/or community-based activities.
LACK OF UNDERSTANDING

- Negative Attitudes Towards People with Disabilities
  - Beliefs about Physical Limitations
  - Concerns for Safety
  - Perceived Lack of Interest
  - Non-Competitiveness
- Stigma / Discrimination
LIMITED ACCESS TO NEEDED RESOURCES

- Lack of Awareness of Available Resources
- Need for Play Spaces (Safe/Conducive to Needs)
- Specialty Equipment
- Training for Professionals/Volunteers
- Training Support Staff
CONCERNS AROUND LIABILITY

- Securing Insurance Coverage (General Liability and Accident)
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-Compliance Issues
- Risk Management and Mitigation
- Specialty Training
- Special Protections (Abuse)
In 2017, the Aspen Institute conducted a study highlighting the need for accessible sports programming and better communication regarding existing opportunities within the WNY community.
Discussions with local agencies and caregiver focus groups revealed too few options exist in WNY that promote physical activity and well-being among young people with disabilities.

Concerns were also raised about existing resources and the lack of training, understanding, and sensitivity towards children, youth, and young adults with disabilities among professional staff and volunteers.
CAREGIVER SUPPORT

- Over 7,800 people with disabilities in WNY live with a family member who serves as their primary caregiver.

- Of these individuals, 1,286 eligible individuals have unmet respite or recreation needs in Erie County alone.
COMMUNITY NEED

- Sport/Exercise Programming for Young People with Disabilities
- Socialization Opportunities for Young People with Disabilities
- Caregiver Respite
- Caregiver Support
- Greater Awareness of Community Resources (Information/Workshops)
- Well-Trained Professionals and Volunteers
- Greater Understanding of Population in Larger Community
Daemen College is a private liberal arts college located in Amherst, New York which offers graduate programs in business, education, and health professions.
All Daemen College undergraduates participate in service learning activities within the local community as part of graduation requirements.
Daemen College is a National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division II School with fourteen (14) sports teams.
Athletics  Service Learning  Social Work  Special Education

Applied Behavior Analysis
CAUSE uses the collegiate environment to provide opportunities for persons with disabilities to enhance their well-being through physical activity, recreation, and social interaction while offering support to their caregivers.
Working collaboratively with community and college partners, CAUSE will be the leading resource for inclusive recreation within Western New York and beyond.
STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

At CAUSE, we recognize the power of relationships and believe that we, as program participants, family members, students, educators, and community members, can learn and grow through our interactions with one another.

We acknowledge the power of sport to create spaces for that learning to take place - emphasizing hard work, determination, perseverance in the face of adversity, comradery, and achievement.

We appreciate the opportunity to engage each other - physically and socially - to promote our health and well-being and support our journey towards becoming our best selves.
We welcome and embrace diversity and difference - inviting everyone to come as they are, *whoever they are*, and to share their unique gifts.

We work together, as partners, to build on our strengths, address our challenges, and share resources.

We are thoughtful and deliberative – using critical feedback to inform our decision-making and striving for continuous improvement.

We respond to the changing needs of the community – adapting our thought processes, strategies, and activities nimbly.

We are open and consistent in our communications, transparent in our dealings with others, and accountable for our actions.
CAUSE programming is designed to provide opportunities for young people with disabilities to develop their fitness, demonstrate courage, and experience the camaraderie and sportsmanship that comes with athletic participation.
Established SW 218: Introduction to Social Work & Social Welfare as a service learning course for CAUSE

Thirty (30) students per semester:
- Social Work & Student Athletes

Learn about Social Work Method:
- Engagement,
- Assessment,
- Intervention, and
- Evaluation

Receive training on persons with disabilities, CPR, first aid, and activity adaptation
CAUSE PAIRINGS

Goals are established for each CAUSE Participant regarding physical and social concerns.

Students and Participants are matched one-on-one.

Student and Participant interact each week.

Progress on goals is recorded each session.
CAUSE SESSIONS

- Held for two hours on Sunday afternoons and Wednesday evenings
- CAUSE Participants engage in structured sport activities
- Incorporates warm-up, social activities, and free time
- Activities are modified as necessary
CAREGIVER SUPPORT

- Provides respite to caregivers during session
- Caregivers use Daemen facilities during session
- Caregivers connect with one another
- Workshops and resource information is shared
COMMUNITY RESOURCES
## BENEFITS TO CAUSE PARTICIPANTS
### PHYSICAL GOALS (SPRING 2018)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Participants with Identified Goal</th>
<th>Participants Showing Improvement</th>
<th>Percentage Showing Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Following Directions</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging in Play</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staying on Task</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>77.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing Transitions</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>84.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sportsmanship</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual Play</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>88.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PHYSICAL GOALS TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>94</strong></td>
<td><strong>77</strong></td>
<td><strong>81.9%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Measures were clarified in 2019
## BENEFITS TO CAUSE PARTICIPANTS

### SOCIAL GOALS (SPRING 2018)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Participants with Identified Goal #</th>
<th>Participants Showing Improvement #</th>
<th>Percentage Showing Improvement %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greeting</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>76.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiation</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requesting Assistance</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>76.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Following Social Context</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>82.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interacting with Others</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>89.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-Solving</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>64.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Advocacy</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SOCIAL GOALS TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>115</strong></td>
<td><strong>85</strong></td>
<td><strong>73.9%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Measures were clarified in 2019
100% of respondents indicated that participating in the CAUSE program improved participant’s feelings about sport and exercise quite a bit or a tremendous amount.

100% of respondents indicated that participation in the CAUSE program has positively impacted the participant’s confidence, health, and well-being.

83% of respondents indicated that participating in the CAUSE program reduced caregiver stress quite a bit or a tremendous amount.

100% of respondents rated their experience with the CAUSE program a 5 out of 5
“We are thrilled with Daemen and the CAUSE program. Please keep it up! There are precious few opportunities for disabled kids to get any exercise during the winter. Daemen has been our salvation. Most important, having our kids meet and work with Daemen athletes and students is wonderful. Thank you!”

“This was great, as he got to learn more about sports he’s had limited interaction with”

“Great students who are so kind and caring for the participants … I can’t say enough good things about the staff”

“I am a widow and I work full time so I never really get any time to myself. I look forward to exercising or running a stress-free errand or two each week. This has been so helpful to me.”

“Every student-athlete that worked with our son was patient with him and helped changed his outlook on gym class and sports into a positive one!”

“XXX has always been involved in sports and activities like dance, Challenger baseball, Special Olympics swimming, but I enjoyed him playing with typical kids who are good role models for him to copy”
Preliminary results suggest that participation in CAUSE programming has yielded positive movement in college student attitudes towards people disabilities, as well as their self-awareness and interactions.

For more details, please see INSINC conference poster presented by Matthew Stewart & Ryan Bonville.
93% of students feel they are more capable of helping persons with disabilities because of the CAUSE program.

83% of students are more likely to work with persons with disabilities in the future because of the CAUSE program.

90% of students feel they are making a positive impact on CAUSE participants.

93% of students are glad they chose the CAUSE program for their service learning.

90% of students would recommend participation in CAUSE program to a friend.
BENEFITS TO COMMUNITY

Greater awareness/understanding of population
- Students changes in major/focus area
- Employment with population

National exposure for CAUSE
- NCAA Award
- Coverage in NCAA Magazine
- Possible replication at other colleges/universities
BENEFITS TO COMMUNITY

Increased interest among foundation/funding community
- Buffalo Bills Foundation
- Wendt Foundation
- The Children’s Guild Foundation
- Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo

Expanded resources to support young people with disabilities and their families
- Improvements to Daemen College Academics & Wellness Center
- Development of Recreation Resource Guide
- Expanded partnerships: The Parent Network, The Park School
KEY LESSONS LEARNED

- Real need for program – Expanded once; additional expansion planned
- One-to-one connection is critical for both Students and Participants
- Caregivers have enough already! Don’t over-structure support for them!
- Criticality of Partners in the process! As experts and as resources!
- Multiple opportunities for evaluation at multiple levels.
- Wide variety of logistical challenges – need for clear policy/procedures
NEXT STEPS - CAUSE STRATEGIC PLAN

**STRUCTURE**
Increase CAUSE’s effectiveness by clarifying roles and responsibilities; establishing clear policies and procedures; and evaluating progress.

**PROGRAM OPERATIONS**
Ensure high quality experiences for all CAUSE Participants through regular training and support.

**COMMUNICATIONS**
Increase awareness of CAUSE through greater outreach, engagement, and use of traditional and social media.

**RESEARCH & EVALUATION**
Document CAUSE’s key strengths, areas for improvement, and opportunities for growth through regular data collection and analysis.

**DEVELOPMENT**
Increase resources for young people with disabilities and their families; Daemen College students, faculty, and staff; and the WNY community through CAUSE.
Increase CAUSE’s effectiveness by clarifying roles and responsibilities; establishing clear policies and procedures; and evaluating progress.

Activities include:

- Establishing Leadership Team/Committees
- Adopting Policies and Procedures
- Development Performance Dashboard
- Creating Advisory Board
PROGRAM OPERATIONS

Ensure high quality experiences for all CAUSE Participants through regular training and support.

Activities include:

- Documenting CAUSE Programming
- Developing Training Protocols
- Incorporating New Student Orientation
- Incorporating Participant Orientation
Increase awareness of CAUSE through greater outreach, engagement, and use of traditional and social media.

Activities include:

- Revisiting Marketing/Website
- Establishing Media Strategy
- Engaging in Internal/External Outreach
- Hosting Engagement Activities
Document CAUSE's key strengths, areas for improvement, and opportunities for growth through regular data collection and analysis.

Activities include:

- Devising Research/Evaluation Protocols
- Establishing Data Collection Plan
- Identifying Research Projects
- Securing Research Resources
DEVELOPMENT

Increase resources for young people with disabilities and their families; Daemen College students, faculty, and staff; and the WNY community through CAUSE.

Activities include:

- Identifying Community Needs
- Developing Programs/Services
- Locating Funding Sources
- Implementing Development Plan
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