

A National Report  
on Building and  
Sustaining Adapted  
Sport Facilities



# **BLUEPRINTS FOR ACCESS**

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# Introduction

This report provides comprehensive summaries of four adapted sport facilities located across the country, highlighting the history, key programs, facility amenities, and revenue generation strategies of each. The goal is to share guidance with organizations and sport leaders looking to build similar facilities

to provide the disability community with adapted sport and recreation opportunities. By examining the unique approaches and successes of these four organizations, this report offers valuable insight and best practices necessary for designing, building, and sustaining an adapted sport facility.

## The organizations featured in this document include:

**Ability360 (Phoenix, AZ)** – Born out of the Disability Rights Movement, Ability360 was established in 1981 as a Center for Independent Living (CIL) and a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. The organization provides programs and services that empower people with all types of disabilities to live independent lifestyles within the community. In 2011, Ability360 expanded, providing access to a universally accessible 45,000-square-foot Sports & Fitness Center.

**Lakeshore Foundation (Birmingham, AL)** – Known for its extensive history and commitment to providing opportunities for individuals with disabilities, Lakeshore Foundation has evolved from a tuberculosis hospital to a leading adapted sports and recreation facility that serves as an Olympic and Paralympic Training Site.

**National Ability Center (Park City, UT)** – Founded in 1985, the National Ability Center (NAC) provides year-round adapted sports and recreation programs with its world-class facilities, leveraging its beautiful setting in the Wasatch Mountains. NAC has become a mecca to disabled outdoor recreation enthusiasts.

**Turnstone Center (Fort Wayne, IN)** – With a rich history dating back to 1943, Turnstone Center offers comprehensive services, including adapted sports and fitness programs, all housed within its expansive Plassman Athletic Center.

The four facilities share several similarities in their missions, programs, and operational strategies, including:

**Mission and Vision:**

All four organizations are dedicated to serving the disability population through adapted sport and recreation while emphasizing the importance of accessibility and inclusion in their facilities and programs. Yet, each organization is unique in the wide-ranging programs they offer to youth, adults, and military veterans. All four organizations agree that it's key to have an established sport/s program before considering the construction of an adapted sport facility.

**Facilities and Amenities:**

All four organizations have invested in state-of-the-art facilities designed to be fully accessible, going well beyond ADA requirements. This includes features such as accessible pools, fitness areas, locker rooms, sports courts, and outdoor recreation spaces. During the design and construction phase, facility leadership considered Universal Design principles to enhance accessibility, such as wide doorways, sensory elements (acoustics, lighting, noise), and selection of materials (flooring, paint colors, lighting).

**Organizational Operations:**

- Each organization is unique in its revenue generation efforts through a mix of memberships, facility rentals, philanthropy, grants, investments, and fundraising events. All note that an adapted sport facility must have diverse revenue streams in place for sustainability. It's vital to review these revenue streams regularly through strategic plans and board meetings.
- Each of the four organizations has active and engaged boards of directors and advisory councils that provide governance and strategic direction. All the facilities have a dedicated leadership team and staff who are passionate about adapted sport and recreation and providing world-class programs.
- Each facility will agree that community engagement is key in operating a successful adapted sport facility. Each of the highlighted organizations is recognized as a pillar in their respective community. They actively engage with the community through outreach programs, partnerships, and events. They also recognize the importance of creating a strong network of volunteers to support their various programs and events.

Although these organizations have many similarities, they are each unique in how they were founded, operate daily, and ensure the sustainability of their facility, which is detailed in the report. Ultimately, we hope this report helps adapted sport leaders gain valuable insights to inform their vision of building and sustaining an adapted sport facility for their community.

# Ability360

**Staff members interviewed:**

- Brielle Carter, Senior Manager of Operations and Sports & Fitness Center
- Meghan Fable, Vice President of Community Relations & Development
- Lauren Hopps, Program Specialist of Fitness
- Gus LaZear, Vice President of Operations and Sports & Fitness Center
- Phil Pangrazio, Former (retired) President & CEO
- Nick Pryor, Program Manager - Athletics
- Robert Reed, Membership and Rentals Manager
- Kaitlyn Verfuierth, Program Manager – 360Outdoors

**Organizational History:**

Arizona Bridge to Independent Living (ABIL)  
Disability Empowerment Center of Arizona  
Virginia G. Piper Sports & Fitness Center for Persons with Disabilities  
Ability360 Center  
Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center

Ability360 was originally known as Arizona Bridge to Independent Living (ABIL) until rebranding in 2015. Ability360 now serves thousands of individuals in the greater Phoenix area and surrounding counties. The Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center, originally known as the Virginia G. Piper Sports & Fitness Center for Persons with Disabilities, grew out of Ability360 in 2011.

Ability360 is one of over 400 CILs that serve communities across the U.S., and offer five core services: Information & Referral, Advocacy, Independent Living Skills Training, Peer Mentoring, and Transition Services. Ability360, a CIL and a non-profit 501(c)(3), offers these core services



and expanded its offerings to include additional programs and services that promote the independent living lifestyle, including but not limited to:

- Sports & Fitness
- Home Care Services
- Employment Services
- Home Modifications

Ability360 finished construction of the Ability360 Center, formerly the Disability Empowerment Center, in 2008. The Ability360 Center, which is universally accessible, is a campus where organizations can lease office space to provide a variety of disability-related services. This creates a hub for the disability community living in the greater Phoenix area to access services and programs. The campus concept is similar to the Ed Roberts Center in Berkeley, California.

The vision for the Sports & Fitness Center emerged in the late 1990s, long before the land was purchased for the Ability360 Center. Athletes with disabilities in the Phoenix area, mostly wheelchair rugby and wheelchair basketball teams at the time, found it increasingly difficult to find consistent and welcoming spaces to train, practice, and compete.

Once the Ability360 Center was complete, then Chief Executive Officer Phil Pangrazio, who was a wheelchair rugby athlete himself, suggested using the extra 2.5 acres of the campus property to build an accessible sports and fitness center. As a wheelchair athlete, Phil knew how difficult it was for his team to find accessible spaces to practice and play. Gary Venjohn, founder of the Phoenix Suns wheelchair basketball program, supported the Sports & Fitness Center concept as well because local wheelchair basketball teams also found it challenging to secure suitable gym space. Early advocates like Pangrazio and Venjohn knew that the facility could be self-sustaining through Ability360's Home Care Services surplus.

The process to build the adaptive gym on the Ability360 Campus took seven years. In 2005, the City of Phoenix opened a bond program focused on supporting local nonprofits. Phil led the charge in applying for these bond funds. He and other local disability advocates articulated the economic impact of building a sports and fitness center for people with disabilities to the Phoenix City Council.



In March 2006, the city awarded a bond of \$5.3M for the Sports & Fitness Center project. These funds were the main source of funding for the capital campaign, but were not actually received until 2010. The total cost to build the facility was about \$12.5 million.

With the bond funds in place, construction of the sports center began in 2010 and took one and a half years to complete. A capital campaign was also launched to raise the remaining necessary funds to complete the construction. The Ability360 Board of Directors utilized its contracted Public Relations firm (HMA PR) and executive staff to lead the capital campaign, which helped with the creation of marketing collateral, architectural renderings, foundation grant proposals, and the naming rights for the center.

In addition to the bond from the City of Phoenix to cover the construction costs, the remainder was funded by a combination of personal donations and foundation grants. The David E. Reese Family Foundation and the Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust gave incredible resources to cover the construction. Reese and his wife, Weezie, saw the movie "Murderball" a documentary about wheelchair rugby and sought to meet one of its featured athletes, an Arizona resident and Paralympian, Scott Hogsett, who then introduced the Reese's to Mr. Pangrazio. Hogsett, Pangrazio and Reese became true champions in the community to complete the fundraising for the overall initial capital campaign.

Construction of the universally accessible, 45,000-square-foot Virginia G. Piper Sports & Fitness Center was completed in 2011 with a grand opening celebration in early 2012. The entire disability-centric campus spanned a total of 120,000 square feet.

According to Pangrazio, activity within the Sports & Fitness Center was initially slow when they opened their doors, which was concerning. Things began to take off at the beginning of 2014, the center's third year open, when new leadership was hired. Growth of membership, new program offerings, and utilization of the facility have continued to steadily increase each year. Pangrazio also shared that it would have been incredibly helpful had they completed a SWOT or feasibility study for the Sports & Fitness Center before starting construction. He expressed that those leading the charge for the facility were "flying by the seat of their pants." Although Pangrazio admits there wasn't a comprehensive plan in place for the facility, he would not do things differently today. Their scrappy plan, filled with influential disability advocates, served them well, providing them the ability to adapt, pivot, and be creative in building a thriving community for people with disabilities.

## RESOURCES

[Ability360 Historical Video](#)

[Tour video](#)

[Baldinger Architectural Studio images](#)



In 2015, the entire organization and campus were rebranded to Ability360 to reflect its original mission and vision. Ability360 owns and operates the Ability360 Center, where it is co-located with a variety of disability service organizations, along with the Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center.

Along with consistent fundraising efforts, Ability360 Home Care Services also supports the sustainability of the Sports & Fitness Center. The program's financial reserves fill any gaps that remain in the annual sport and fitness budget. Ability360 Home Care Services is one of only a few home care programs in the country run by a CIL.

Due to land limitations, there are minimal opportunities to expand Ability360's footprint or make renovations. However, the facility aims to optimize its current space and explore new revenue streams.

While building the Ability360 Center, organizational leaders had the foresight to work with city officials to establish a light rail stop directly in front of the campus to provide accessible public transportation to the Ability360 visitors. As many know, transportation is a significant barrier for people with disabilities in the community. The light rail stop provides easy access for individuals with disabilities to get to Ability360, utilize its many valuable programs, including sports and fitness, and access other disability-related organizations. The stop also connects to the Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport, making travel to and from the Ability360 campus simple for visiting teams and athletes.

#### Current Program Offerings and Services At-A-Glance:

Today, the Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center has a growing and thriving membership and continues to offer new programs and opportunities for people with disabilities to live an active, healthy lifestyle. In 2023, a total of 5,275 individuals with disabilities participated in Ability360 recreation, sport, and fitness programs. The center offers a variety of inclusive membership levels and types, and has not raised its membership rates since its opening.

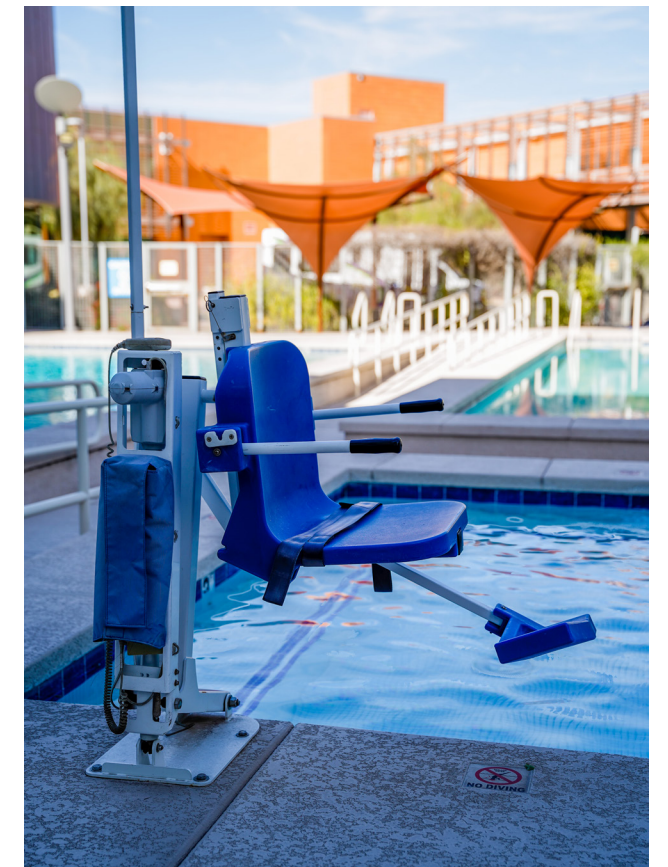
The Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center provides 7,000 square feet of fitness space that includes accessible weight and cardio machines, along with a variety of group fitness classes facilitated in a group fitness room and online. Fitness equipment has been purchased through grants and donations, with an annual appeal based on the need for new equipment. The Sports & Fitness Center alone serves a total of 2,800 members of all abilities annually, with an average of 175 members utilizing it each day.

The following are some notable features that make the Sports & Fitness Center welcoming and accessible:

- Accessible strength equipment.
  - Machine seats are removable for mobility device access.
  - There is 5 feet of space between equipment/machines, which is 2 feet beyond the ADA requirement of 3 feet.
- There is one group fitness room.
- Fitness classes are included with membership.
  - 35-45 classes are offered weekly.
  - Ability360 widened the doors to the group fitness room to fit larger mobility devices and equipment.
  - Larger group fitness classes have been facilitated on the courts and the rooftop terrace/parking lot.
- Fitness room orientations are provided with membership.
  - Members can purchase the following fee-based services:
    - Personal Training.
    - Recreation Therapy.
    - Swim Lessons.

Below is a list of various equipment adaptations focused on providing independence to members while they're working out:

- Braille plates on machines describing how to use them.
- Hearing loop system in the group fitness room and sport courts.
- Straps on medicine balls to help with grip.
- Ability360 is a latex- and scent-free facility.
- Arm ergometers with ramps for mobility device users to be able to access.



- Machines offer a variety of straps and adjustments for accessibility.
- On some equipment, members have the option to use one arm at a time.
- Dumbbells that include Braille go up in 2.5-lb increments rather than the standard 5 lbs.



- Grip devices such as active hands and hooks are available at all times.
- Indoor track (one lap is one-tenth of a mile).
- Two basketball(sport) courts with ramps down to the gym floor.
- Outdoor pool that includes a lap pool, therapy, and spa.
  - Each pool has multiple access entry points.
- Indoor rock climbing wall with adaptive equipment.
- Accessible locker rooms with access to outdoor pool.
- Four accessible shower stalls in each locker room.
- Private Bathrooms.
- The Ability360 Center includes accessible conference rooms/meeting spaces.
  - 3,034-square-foot conference room that can seat 120-150 guests with an adjacent courtyard.
  - 2 classrooms.
    - Classroom A is 526 square feet and can accommodate 15 people.
    - Classroom B is 732 square feet and can accommodate 25 people.
- The Ability360 Center rooftop provides 7,400 square feet of lighted patio space.
- The Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center includes an atrium.

- The Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center's basement provides 3,000 square feet of storage for adaptive sport equipment, including sport chairs for basketball, tennis, pickleball, power soccer chairs, and rugby chairs. If an athlete is on an Ability360 team, they can store their equipment in the basement. Most adapted sport facilities wish for more storage based on the needs of storing adapted sport equipment.

Ability360 also offers a variety of recreational and competitive sports and athletic opportunities.

Other offerings to the community and educational institutions include: field trips, various internships, varied volunteer opportunities, and community education on disability and inclusion. The Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center also offers a robust variety of programming for military members, past and present, including a very generous annual membership offered at a significant discount rate.

The organization's sports programs continue to grow consistently. For example, in 2015, Ability360 acquired the Phoenix Suns men's wheelchair basketball team with 10 total athletes. Today, there are five wheelchair basketball teams with 60 athletes that include two youth teams and co-ed teams, which make up the Wheelchair Suns and the Mercury, the women's wheelchair basketball team. Sport and recreation program participation has steadily grown, largely as a result of word-of-mouth awareness, establishing Ability360 as a hub for the disability community throughout the greater Phoenix metropolitan area.



Leadership notes Ability360 sports and programs are driven by athletes, members and staff. If there is interest among the Ability360 community for a given sport or program, they'll pilot a program for sustainable interest.

Program growth can also be attributed to the many strategic partners Ability360 has acquired locally, regionally, and nationally. Locally, Ability360 partners with many rehabilitation hospitals to support people's transition from the hospital to a rehabilitation setting and back into the community. All the Phoenix-based professional sports teams are involved and partner with Ability360 in a variety of ways. Regionally, Ability360 also partners with many other Arizona-based adaptive sports organizations, as well as city and state park associations. Nationally, Ability360 has teams that compete in various national governing bodies of sport. These partnerships are invaluable and contribute to the organization's impact, growth, and success.

The Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center continues to expand inclusive program offerings to include a range of outdoor recreation activities through mergers and partnerships. 360Outdoors was established in 2022 with the acquisition of Daring Adventures, enabling the organization to offer an increased variety of outdoor recreation activities such as hiking, mountain biking, whitewater rafting, indoor and outdoor rock climbing, fly fishing, and kayaking. Ability360 expanded its program offerings again by partnering with the City of Phoenix Parks and Recreation Department to offer services at a satellite location, Telephone Pioneer Park, the first barrier-free park in the United States, which was built in 1988.

**Sports & Fitness Center Revenue Generation:**

The Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center’s revenue is generated through memberships, facility rentals, fee-based services, and various philanthropy efforts with fundraising events, grants, and donor contributions. Membership fees have never been designed to cover operations. As noted previously, Ability360 Home Care Services also subsidizes the center’s operations. Although the City of Phoenix provided the initial bond to start construction of the facility, it does not provide operating funds for the center.

In 2013, the Sports & Fitness Center’s operating budget was approximately \$1.2M. In 2024, the operating budget had grown to \$3.1M. Upon opening the facility, the development strategy started with branding and building awareness across the Phoenix area. It’s important to set expectations with the Board that development is about creating relationships, not transactions. It can take four to five years to build solid relationships and see a return from a fundraising perspective. Testimonials from members and athletes are the best sales tool for development.

Ability360 hosts three annual fundraising events:

- Breakfast Fundraiser.
- ESports Tournament.
- Golf Tournament.

Ability360 provides opportunities for recurring contributions throughout the year:

- Monthly giving group.
- Annual giving group - for individuals or foundations that give \$2,500 or more per year.

Facility rentals are a robust revenue generator for Ability360 while always ensuring the organization’s own program needs remain a priority in facility usage. The courts can be used for a variety of sports – basketball, volleyball, martial arts, etc. – and can be reserved for regular programming or special events. Ability360 offers competitive rental rates for nonprofits and for-profit organizations.

**Ability360 Team:**

- Ability360 has 124 staff members and approximately 1,200 home care employees who support services across the Phoenix Metro Area and surrounding areas. The Sports & Fitness Center has 11 full-time employees, 20 part-time employees, and over 40 contract employees (personal trainers, group fitness instructors, etc.)
- Up to 15 members serve on the Board of Directors.
- Ability360 has a strong volunteer community providing nearly 5,000 hours a year in donated time and support.
- As a Center for Independent Living (CIL), Ability360 is required by bylaws that at least 51% of the staff and board of directors must have a disability.



**Technology and Supporting Operations:**

Ability360 Sports & Fitness Center utilizes a fitness and wellness software platform to manage its membership and facility rentals. The platform allows members to register for classes online via its app capabilities. Every member has their own account where they can review their appointments with personal trainers, recreation therapists, and check in to classes. The program can provide reports on members, membership types, and payments. The software can also track grant spending. The app is accessible to voice-over screen readers.

The organization also utilizes the software for Ability360’s rental contracts for sport courts and conference rooms/meeting spaces. Ability360 rental spaces are available for day and evening use, and its venues provide the setting for videoconferencing, live broadcasting capabilities, meetings, conferences, holiday parties, weddings, and other corporate and social events.

It’s important to note that the software is not a comprehensive platform across all Ability360 Sports & Fitness programs and operations. For example, 360Outdoors programming and registration are tracked on a different platform. Staff have created customized features within the software that are tailored to the organization’s current needs.

**Recommendations, Considerations, and Lessons Learned When Building an Adapted Sport Facility:**

Ability360 leadership has learned many valuable lessons and gained incredible insight since planning, building, and opening the Sports & Fitness Center. Below are some of the recommendations other organizations should consider in their planning process when looking to build a similar type of facility:

- ALWAYS consider the accessibility of the facility and spaces within the building. The design must go beyond ADA regulations. Even when

Ability360 opened in 2012, its door widths did go beyond federal regulations, but recently discovered the door widths didn't easily accommodate users of bariatric wheelchairs who were accessing the group fitness classrooms.

- Adapted sport facilities need to be universally designed to be inclusive of everyone. Ability360 has become a community center for all.
- Disability advocates, leaders, and influencers MUST be involved in advocating for the facility, planning and building the facility, as well as implementing programs. Include athletes and board members on planning committees, and include disability advocates and future facility end-users to present at various community meetings supporting construction.
- Collaborate with people who can put together professional and savvy presentations and materials as your capital campaign kicks off, ensuring a sophisticated look and feel.
- The longevity of staff is key to the success of the facility. It also creates consistency for members.
  - Build a team that:
    - Works hard.
    - Is passionate.
    - Shows up every day.
    - Is authentic/real.
    - Members trust.
- Consider a software program that can grow and adapt along with the organization.
- Ensure a facility is easy to access via parking (lots of accessible spaces), public transportation, and even the airport when hosting travel teams for tournaments.

Current Challenges:

- With facility rentals, there is a concern that disability programs may get crowded out with revenue-generating programs / camps. Ability360's priority for rentals is to seek organizations whose missions align with ours.
- There are concerns with the Sports & Fitness Center having multiple floor levels if there is ever a power outage and / or an emergency with no access to the elevator.
- The limited footprint of the facility is a challenge. There aren't many opportunities to grow Ability360 through facility expansion or major renovations.
- Staff would like to see more storage and additional courts for practices and tournaments. There's enough activity to fill another court or two.
- If two group fitness rooms were available, they would be used on a regular basis. Currently, the Sports & Fitness Center has one.
- Staff noted they would like a tactile map of the Sports & Fitness Center layout, an app, and more digital signage.
- Pools are expensive to maintain and take a lot of staff resources and contracted expertise.

# Lakeshore Foundation

Staff members interviewed:

- Jen Allred, Chief of Programs & Special Projects
- John Kemp, President & CEO
- Carol Kutik, Director, Fitness & Aquatics (retired)
- Cathy Miller, Chief Operating & Financial Officer
- Kevin Orr, Director, Recreation & Athletics
- Amy Rauworth, Chief Research & Innovation Officer
- Doug Tanner, Director of Facilities
- Chris Thomason, Chief Advancement Officer
- Jeff Underwood, Former CEO (Retired)

Organizational History:

Lakeshore Foundation has a long history of providing opportunities for individuals with disabilities. The campus began operations in 1925 after land was donated by a Birmingham family to establish a tuberculosis hospital. These 45-acres of donated land for the hospital is now Lakeshore Foundation's campus.

In the early 1970s, the tuberculosis center became the Lakeshore Rehabilitation Hospital. The hospital board contracted with the Baptist Healthcare System to manage hospital operations. At the time, Mike Stephens, a graduate student and intern with the University of Alabama, Birmingham, who also had lived disability experience, was named administrator of the Lakeshore Rehabilitation Hospital. In this role, Mike noticed many patients returning to the hospital with secondary conditions after they were discharged. As a disabled individual himself, Mike knew that rehabilitation from a life-changing injury was more than care received in the hospital. Rehabilitation care extends beyond one's hospital stay, supporting patients as they transition back into the community. Lakeshore Hospital's goal was to create a healthy life post-injury through a supportive recovery and rehabilitation process.

As part of this new focus on rehabilitation through health and wellness, Lakeshore formed its first wheelchair basketball team with patients from Lakeshore Hospital. The hospital did not have a gym on campus, so the team utilized different gyms throughout the Birmingham community to practice and compete. Sport opportunities continued to expand to include wheelchair tennis, swimming, and several recreation programs that reached local disabled youth.

Lakeshore Foundation, a 501(c)(3), was founded in 1984 as an extension of the hospital rehabilitation process focusing on sport and recreation programs for individuals with disabilities. Community leader and Lakeshore Hospital employee Jeff Underwood was named the organization's first president and Chief Executive



Officer. Lakeshore's community-based adapted sport programs continued to grow and expand, finding it more and more difficult to find accessible, consistent, and welcoming spaces to implement the growing adapted sport programs. Jeff and Mike recognized the Foundation's need for its own accessible sport facility, and their creative solution was to build one.

In 1984, Lakeshore built the Wallace Recreation Center which included one basketball court, a four-lane 25-meter pool, and weight room. The accessible space provided Lakeshore Foundation the opportunity to implement sport and recreation programs for not only hospital outpatients but also the broader disabled community in the Birmingham area. The first programs based out of the Recreation Center included basketball, wheelchair tennis, track/field, and swimming. Past Lakeshore leadership notes that the current expanded facility and the organization's success exist because of these initial programs. With an accessible and welcoming space, Lakeshore programs quickly expanded and grew out of the initial recreation center.

In the mid-1980s, Lakeshore Hospital became the inspiration for ReLife, a rehabilitation company founded by Mike Stephens. ReLife was a "hub-and-spoke" systems approach to rehabilitation that included: 1) early intervention 2) intermediate care 3) community reentry, and 4) outpatient services. Eight years after leading ReLife as the CEO, Mike sold the company to HealthSouth. With the HealthSouth merger, Mike transferred all the of assets Lakeshore Hospital to Lakeshore Foundation including the 45-acres where Lakeshore Foundation is located today and operates its sport and recreation programs. Years later, Lakeshore Foundation would become

the landlord of all the tenants on the 45-acre campus. By the end of 1994, Lakeshore Foundation had \$60 million in cash and assets. It was a banner year. Mike's long-term vision for Lakeshore had come to fruition – the Foundation now had the resources to be a world-class sport and recreation program for the physically disabled.

With these new assets, Lakeshore Foundation staff members could start planning a larger facility. The Lakeshore Foundation team completed a SWOT analysis to identify the ever-growing need for accessible sport and recreation spaces and to highlight how many more people the organization could serve with a larger facility. Lakeshore involved key constituents in the SWOT process including disabled individuals, advocates, athletes, and strategic partners. Including diverse constituent groups in the SWOT analysis provided a surprising outcome - increased awareness of the organization across the community.

The Lakeshore Board of Directors approved the plans to build this new facility in 1997, and Cathy Miller, Lakeshore's current Chief Financial Officer, was hired to manage the planning and financial aspects of the expansion. When plans began to build a facility, the priority was to build a space where members had unencumbered access. It took 18 months to complete the construction. The new facility opened in 2001 with a total cost of \$22M to build the 120,000-square-foot facility. Jeff Underwood noted that it was a little scary upon opening the new facility in 2001 as it took time to ramp up programs to meet the new expansive sport and recreation spaces.

Over the years, Lakeshore continued to expand opportunities for disabled athletes by utilizing space around the 45-acre campus. The hospital transitional living space was renovated into accessible dorms for visiting athletes and teams.

The Lakeshore Cottages (similar to a one-bedroom apartment with an accessible bathroom, full kitchen, and laundry) were built by a local real estate developer who wanted to support Lakeshore's expanding injured military programs. Lakeshore just needed to provide the land for the cottages. The cottages have become a valuable asset to the organization, providing military participants as well as athletes and teams the opportunity to stay on campus. Corporate groups can also rent the cottages for team building and planning retreats.

In 2003, Lakeshore earned its designation as a United States Olympic & Paralympic Training Center. Through the Lakeshore National Adapted Sports Organization (LNASO) formed in 2023, Lakeshore is home to USA Wheelchair Rugby, Boccia United States, and U.S. Para Powerlifting.

## RESOURCES

The following book provides a detailed history of Lakeshore Foundation: ["Sports Rehabilitation and the Human Spirit: How the Landmark Program at the Lakeshore Foundation Rebuilds Bodies and Restores," by Anita Smith](#)

<https://kpsgroup.com/projects/lakeshore-rec-facility/>

[Lakeshore Foundation Video](#)

Lakeshore leadership recognizes that its charter which notes the organization’s focus on people with physical disabilities can be limiting. Leadership is now focused on the goal to create an organization that is welcome to all.

Three main pillars drive the strategic plan of Lakeshore today – activity, research and advocacy.

**Membership:**

When Lakeshore opened the expanded facility in 2001, its membership was approximately 800 people when they started an overall membership program. Prior to 2001, Lakeshore participants registered for individual programs rather than signing up or an overall membership with access to all facility amenities. Fast forward to 2024 when Lakeshore’s membership had grown to 4,000 members with an average of 400 member visits daily (12,000 member visits per month). Recent membership activity is exceeding pre-COVID activity. Members range in age from six months to 100 years old. The goal is that every member who comes through Lakeshore’s doors has access to everything – sport, recreation, fitness area, pool, etc. Membership is below market rate to ensure financial accessibility by all. Membership revenue is budgeted around \$750,000 and is only 8 percent of the organization’s revenue. Lakeshore’s membership model will not sustain Lakeshore’s annual operating expenses (see Lakeshore Revenue Generation. Twenty percent of members receive some sort of scholarship to join Lakeshore. Anyone with a physical disability or chronic health condition such as arthritis, diabetes, or cardiovascular disease can join. Additionally, through support from the State of Alabama any Alabama veteran and their family members have access to a complimentary membership regardless of disability status. Through 2024, 74% of those veterans self-report a physical disability or chronic health condition.



View Lakeshore’s various [membership types and levels](#).

**Sport and Fitness:**

Lakeshore offers a variety of [sport and fitness](#) opportunities for both [youth](#) and adults. In the 1980s, the organization hosted “Super Sport Saturdays” where individuals could come try a variety of sports on the weekend – then programs expanded to being offered throughout the week. Sport Saturday programs are now offered quarterly for both youth and adult populations.

The [Lakeshore Fitness Center](#) includes 4,800 square feet of accessible fitness machines and 1,200 square feet for free weights. The organization’s fitness programming goal is to create a space where members can work out independently. If needed, a member

can bring a caregiver free of charge to provide assistance.

Lakeshore offers a variety of group fitness classes (chair yoga, Zumba, Krank cycling, etc.) to members, which are included in their membership. New members receive a complimentary orientation upon joining. Additional training sessions are available at an additional cost. Lakeshore has unique requirements for interns in the fitness area. While the usual requirement for interns is 90 hours, Lakeshore requires 400 hours to provide interns with a deeper and broader understanding of disability sport and fitness. All fitness staff members have some sort of training and fitness certification. Lakeshore always has a fitness specialist on-site and in attendance at every fitness class. FY25 will include a capital project that includes changing out the floor surface in the fitness center. Lakeshore will remove older dated carpet and install more durable rubber flooring.



Lakeshore’s current sport and recreation program amenities include:

- 3 basketball (sport) courts
  - Hardwood court maintenance requires \$15,000 - \$18,000 a year to refinish (taking a coat off each court, cleaning and recoating)
  - Lakeshore resurfaces down to the bare wood and repaints the floors every 7-10 years
  - There is a financial investment in having specialized equipment to clean the floors, especially with the marks left from rugby chairs
- Indoor 200-meter track with MONDO surface
- [2-Pools](#) – both pools have multiple ways of accessing
  - 4-lane 25-meter pool maintained at 93-95 degrees
  - 8-lane 25-yard pool maintained at 83-85 degrees
  - The county checks the levels and safety of the pools monthly
  - Plan for additional space in the aquatics area for chemicals and equipment storage
- Pools are replastered approximately every five – seven years
- Shooting range (for air rifle and archery)

Adapted sport programs offered include:

- Archery
- Air Rifle
- Boccia
- Pickleball
- Para Powerlifting
- Power Soccer

- Swimming (fitness and youth swim team)
- Track and Field
- Wheelchair Basketball
- Wheelchair Football
- Wheelchair Rugby
- Wheelchair Tennis

Lakeshore utilizes the expertise, skills and support of approximately 150-200 volunteers annually. The annual number of volunteers can double when the organization hosts large events.

### Sports Science and Performance Center

In early 2024, Lakeshore opened the [Lakeshore Sports Science and Performance Center](#) (LSSPC) – the first facility of its kind in the country to focus on athletes with disabilities. LSSPC aims to fill this void in the adapted sport movement and focus on creating equity for disabled athletes. LSSPC provides Performance Assessment & Data Analysis, Strength & Conditioning, Nutrition, and Mental Performance services. In addition, LSSPC focuses on building new avenues to advance sport science through cutting-edge research.

### Lakeshore Revenue Generation:

Lakeshore’s annual operating budget is \$14-\$15M. Facility maintenance alone is \$2M (including transportation/fleet vehicles, security, and environmental services).

Lakeshore has diverse revenue sources to sustain operations each year including:

- 20 percent of annual revenue comes from philanthropy/development and membership
- 30 percent of annual revenue comes from the organization’s investment portfolio. On average, Lakeshore’s Board of Directors approves an allocation of four to five percent from the investment fund annually based on Lakeshore’s needs.
  - 10 years ago, the endowment was \$70M. Now the fund is \$90M, but the buying power has eroded due to inflation.
  - Lakeshore leadership recognizes its unique position in having an investment fund based on Mike Stephen’s vision for Lakeshore 40 years ago.
- 30 percent of annual revenue comes from leasing properties on the 45-acre campus.
  - Beyond its sport facilities, Lakeshore is responsible for maintaining 200,000 square feet across campus which includes its leasing entities. Maintenance includes landscaping, environmental services, and security of seven buildings across the 45-acre campus.



Additional revenue comes from renting space in the facility. The organization has identified opportunities to fill the natural downtime of the space with fee-for-service rentals. Recently, Lakeshore is renting its basketball courts on weekdays to the Birmingham Squadron, an NBA G League team.

Lakeshore’s advancement team focused on implementing a comprehensive philanthropic fundraising plan that includes strategies for:

- Planned Giving
- Major Gifts
- Capital Projects
- Annual Gifts
- Grants: Lakeshore has historically been very successful in this area receiving grants from the Department of Education, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Veterans Affairs (VA), and National Institutes of Health (NIH) to progress health promotion for people with disabilities and access to healthy living opportunities. Through these grants, Lakeshore collaborates with strategic partners on national disability initiatives such as the National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability (NCHPAD), and RecTech to advance disability [research](#) and [advocacy](#).
- Foundations (local and national)
- Corporate Giving

The advancement team’s goal is to grow by 10 percent annually.

Lastly, when looking at ways to generate revenue, be cautious of mission creep with regard to development and fundraising. It can become a larger issue the bigger an organization becomes. Continue to remain focused and aligned with your organization’s mission.



### Lakeshore Team:

- Lakeshore has approximately 100 staff members (including both full-time and part-time). In the 1980s, Lakeshore had three full-time staff members. The staff has been instrumental in Lakeshore’s growth and success. They were visionaries and championed a new and larger facility. Staff members wanted to do more to support the mission and knew that required adequate space. Lakeshore leadership will note that the staff is the backbone of successful programs – the building is a bonus.
- The Lakeshore Board of Directors is made up of 28 business and community leaders. Lakeshore also has an Advisory Council comprised of accomplished leaders and experts in fields that align with Lakeshore’s mission and vision. Lakeshore’s Junior Board is composed of young Birmingham professionals, ages 22 to 40, eager to support, promote, and elevate Lakeshore Foundation’s mission and pillars of activity, research, and advocacy.



### Technology and Supporting Operations:

Lakeshore currently uses the membership software program, Club Automation. The licensing fee for this is approximately \$4,000 per year and requires a full-time membership coordinator to oversee the maintenance of the program. Lakeshore has not implemented the Club Automation app software as the technology is not accessible to many Lakeshore members. This issue surrounding accessible technology is not uncommon when identifying various technology solutions that provide accessibility to all users.

### Marketing and Outreach:

The Marketing and Communications team manages communications projects for all departments of Lakeshore. The team operates a small video studio in-house, produces digital and print collateral, oversees advertising, and manages media relations and branding for the organization.

### Recommendations, Considerations, and Lessons Learned When Building an Adapted Sport Facility:

- Always start with the program. Lakeshore's facility exists because of the initial programs.
- There's no right way to build a program or facility, but you have to work within the culture of the community.
  - It's important to understand how your program fits within the larger ecosystem of the community. For example, ensure your facility hours of operation align with local bus or transportation schedules. Understand how these larger community services may impact your facility and its operations.
- New facility leadership must understand the cost of overhead and operating such a facility. They need to understand the revenue needed to cover operations and expenses. You have to sustain what you build.
- Pools and aquatic programs are expensive to maintain.
- Go above and beyond ADA requirements with facility design and consider:
  - The space and layout
  - Signage

- Sensory elements – acoustics, lighting, noise, etc.
- Wide doorways for sport chairs with lots of camber
- Selection of materials – flooring, paint colors, lighting
- Factor in LOTS of space for storage
- Include people with diverse disabilities in the design phase
- You don't have to have \$30M to build a facility. First, build an impactful program and be creative with current community assets and potential partnerships. An organization doesn't need a disability-focused facility to benefit the community.
- When establishing your program/sport plan, it's okay to not be everything to everybody. Your organization doesn't have to fill all the program gaps. Partner and collaborate with other organizations that specialize in particular recreation or sport programs.
- When looking to build a new facility or expand an existing facility, put a detailed plan together. This way staff can justify projected outcomes for new/renovated spaces. Outline:
  - How many more people will you be able to serve with this new space?
  - What can your organization accomplish with this new/renovated space?
  - Since they work hand-in-hand, how many more fundraising dollars can you bring in as a result of being able to offer more programs in a new/larger space?
- Understand that it takes time to develop donors. It's important to continually engage donors and ask them how they want to be involved and contribute to the organization's success.
- An adapted sport facility project needs a champion. This can be a person or an organization passionate about the project that will ensure milestones are met. The champion needs to be invested in the facility project for the long-haul. Be cautious if this champion is a parent of a child who participates in the current programs as parents may be biased or their involvement may wane if their child is no longer an active participant.
- Understand the business of your organization:
  - What does licensing look like for hosting events or launching new programs?
  - What do you need to know about insurance related to youth programs and volunteers interacting with children? What insurance do you need to have for specific sport programs, hosting events, or providing athlete transportation?
- Develop a parking plan. Lakeshore had to push back against city building code officers to add more accessible parking spaces beyond ADA



requirements. Be an advocate - you know what your constituents need. Lakeshore created 20 "proximity" parking spots. These spots are not necessarily ADA accessible, do not require a state-issued disability parking placard, but provide members with easy access and close proximity to the building.

- Review your organization's strategic plan annually and measure impact consistently year-to-year.
- Disability sport intersects with broader disability conversations and context. Lakeshore lives in a bigger ecosystem than sport. It's important to ask what the organization can do beyond sport. Disability conversations that adapted sport organizations may intersect with and can advocate for inclusion: independent living, media, transportation, healthcare, education, and employment.
- If you plan to build a facility, set aside no less than 20 percent of the budget for operations and maintenance.
- Have a business plan in place that addresses staff, programs, and operations.

#### Challenges:

- Lakeshore leadership is working with its Board of Directors related to the organization's bylaws as it continues to examine creating an inclusive environment. When the mission was set forth in the mid-1980s, the focus was on individuals with physical disabilities.
- Leadership values having leaders and staff with disabilities and lists that as a preferred qualification on job postings - a team that is representative of the population the organization serves.



# National Ability Center

#### Staff members interviewed:

- Andrew Ball, Guest Services Sr. Manager,
- Elisa Banyard, Recreation and Adventure Manager
- Caitlin Bognaski, Director of Development
- Colton Bradley, Sr. Manager of Equipment
- Anna Davis, Ski/Snowboard Sr. Manager
- Jan Drake, Equestrian Development and Facility Manager
- Brian Essig, Associate Program Director
- Jeff Fons, Chief Operating Officer
- Willie Ford, Chief Executive Officer
- Hannah Kuhnhausen-Urbe, Sr. Manager of IT & Operational Excellence
- Tracy Meier, Chief Program & Education Officer
- Andrea Stack, Sr. Manager of Camps, Community, and Education
- Meeche White, Founder, former CEO (retired)

#### Organizational History:

In 1985, Meeche White, co-founded the National Ability Center (NAC) in Park City, Utah. Initially, the organization was named the Park City Handicapped Sports Association (PCHSA). Meeche had a dream of creating programs in the community that made the community better and made individuals feel better about themselves. She thought this dream would involve theater and arts until a friend mentioned therapeutic recreation. She trained with adapted ski pioneer Hal O'Leary based out of Winter Park, Colorado at the National Sports Center for the Disabled (NSCD). She was focused on the organic process of building programs and supporters not forcing or calculating program growth. The organization did just as Meeche had hoped – grow organically from community and participant interest. Meeche knew there was a population base in Salt Lake City and that Park City had the best beginner terrain to teach skiers with disabilities...a great combination for launching a widely successful program.

NAC started from humble beginnings. In 1985, NAC provided a total of 45 ski lessons. Then slowly added cycling to their program offerings. In 1986, NAC operated out of a 300 square foot office with two desks on the mountain with a trailer full of equipment – the program was already busting at the seams.

Ten years later the organization became so well known locally and nationally, NAC received an anonymous donation of 26-acres in Park City. This land is now known as the Ranch. Today, the Ranch houses the administration building, guest lodging, equestrian center, the Hub recreation center, challenge course, archery range and access to an extensive 200 mile trail system for cyclists and Nordic skiers.

In preparation for the 2002 Olympic and Paralympic Games, Meeche served as the ADA Manager with the Salt Lake Organizing Committee. During the 2002 Olympic



and Paralympic Games, NAC had the opportunity to showcase the organization and the Ranch. That year, NAC received a donation from Seagram's/Budweiser to manage their beer booth. In addition, Budweiser leased NAC lodging facilities for their staff bringing in surplus revenue that year.

NAC staff know how fortunate they are to have world-class facilities. For 40-years, NAC has continued to renovate, upgrade and expand their facilities. The outdoor equestrian arena was transformed into an indoor arena with supporting tack room and stables for their herd allowing equestrian programs year-round. A new challenge course was built at the Ranch in 2017 in partnership with Intermountain Healthcare and Utah's Governor's Office of Economic Development. The Recreation Hub was completed at the Ranch in 2020 providing 5,000+ square feet of indoor recreation and event space along with an indoor climbing wall. In 2022, expansions and upgrades were completed for the 8,000 square foot cycling storage facility allowing expansion of the sizable NAC cycling fleet (250 bikes of various kinds). NAC is able to offer a broader range of biking experiences. The McGrath Mountain Center opened in 2023 offering 9,400 square feet of accessible space for ski and snowboard operations. Vail Resorts and Park City Mountain donated the land for the new state-of-the-art ski-in, ski-out facility. In addition to providing accessible space to NAC skiers and riders, the building also provides space for instructors, volunteers and the ability to store a variety of ski and snowboard equipment. This is quite the facility upgrade from NAC's humble beginnings providing programs out of a trailer in the 1980s.

It's important to note the NAC programs are considered a destination as 40% of users come from out of state while locals make up 60% of the participants. NAC leadership is always looking for ways to continue to support participants when they return home. Approximately 50 families from around the country have moved to the Park City area because of the impactful experiences their family members had participating in NAC programs.

Every NAC experience is subsidized 80% and this is before a participant receives a



scholarship. NAC provides a total of \$6.5M annually in program subsidies and scholarships to program participants.

The organization is currently working on a 10-year strategic plan for 2025-2034. This is a timely project as the Salt Lake City area will be hosting the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2034. Having had experience with the 2002 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the organization knows hosting the Games locally is an incredible opportunity to showcase their programs and community impact.

#### Facility Highlights:

[The Hub](#)

[Lodge](#)

[McGrath Mountain Center](#) (ski, snowboard, ski bike)

[Equestrian Center](#)

[Camp Oakley](#)

[Moab Outpost](#)

#### Current Program Offerings and Services At-A-Glance:

NAC offers a variety of recreation programs for people with disabilities. Friends, family and caregivers are encouraged to participate as well. The organization provides 33,000 total program experiences annually across all four seasons to 5,400 participants.

NAC staff notes there is a lot of program demand for ski, snowboard and cycling programs. Not surprising as these are the foundational programs that launched NAC back in the 80s.

There are six sports offered at the Ranch in the winter. The most popular winter programs are indoor climbing and Nordic.

- Fat tire biking
- Indoor climbing
- Nordic skiing
- Pickleball
- Team building
- Snow shoeing

There are 10 sports offered at the Ranch in the summer.

Cycling and mountain biking are the most popular sports in the summer at the Ranch.

- Archery
- Challenge course
- Climbing (indoor and outdoor)
- Cycling
- Mountain biking
- Paddle sports
- Pickleball
- Team building
- Water sports



Equestrian programs (mounted and unmounted) are offered year-round.

Sled hockey is popular in the summer and winter. NAC does not have their own rink but utilizes a rink near the Ranch. The local rink provides sled storage and NAC pays for the ice time.

There is growing interest in Moab rafting programs and overnight Adventure trips.

The NAC also offers family trips. Many of the programs and trips are inclusive of campers with and without disabilities.

[Camp Oakley](#) is a satellite NAC program that allows the organization to extend their programming beyond Park City. Camp Oakley yurts offer accessible camping and outdoor activities in Moab.

[Moab Outpost](#) was created in 2017 when NAC merged with Splore bringing additional outdoor recreation opportunities to the NAC community. The Outpost offers adaptive rafting, mountain biking, climbing, camping and adventures in Utah National Parks.

There is a lake nearby the NAC Ranch where participants can enjoy wake surfing and boarding, paddle sports (kayaking, paddle boarding) and water skiing. Adaptive equipment is available to all participants to ensure a safe and thrilling adventure.

### Competition:

In addition to recreational opportunities, NAC also offers competitive sports for those looking to hone and develop their sport skills and pursue sport excellence.

NAC is home to an elite alpine ski and snowboard competition team that trains and prepares athletes to compete at regional, national and international events. Many team members train with NAC with the goal of reaching the Paralympic Games. NAC focuses on individual athlete development through world-class coaching and training facilities.

The NAC Flyers offers competitive opportunities for athletes with cognitive and intellectual disabilities to compete in regional and national event in alpine skiing, snowboarding, cycling, and archery.

### NAC Revenue Generation:

NAC's annual operating budget is \$11M. The organization receives an annual in-kind donation in the form of lift tickets for their ski and snowboard programs from Vail Resorts (owner of Park City Mountain Resort). The in-kind donation allows NAC to subsidize their ski and snowboard programs making the opportunity affordable for participants.



NAC hosts five fundraising events annually with Red, White and Snow being the largest fundraising event held in March. The additional four events include a Barn Party that helps support the equestrian program, two cycling events and a veterans event.

In 2024 NAC received approximately \$1.8M in grant funding and is looking to expand their grant portfolio.

NAC has a number of opportunities to showcase their organization and boost their revenue to support operations in the next ten years. In 2025, NAC will be celebrating its 40th anniversary and in 2034 Salt Lake City will again be hosting the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

### NAC Team:

- NAC has approximately 65 staff (including both full-time and part-time). The organization also has 80-100 seasonal staff and instructors providing specific program expertise for various recreational activities.
- The NAC Board of Directors is made up of 18 business and community leaders.

### Technology and Supporting Operations:

NAC utilizes Salesforce as their core CRM for all program-related activities. Finance and HR functions are managed on a different platform.

Salesforce is used for:

- Program reservations for individual lessons, sessions
- Program/instructor participant progress/lesson notes, scheduling and student information
- Group reservations for camps and lodging
- Online services – how to donate, volunteer, participate



NAC's system is custom built and maintained internally. Every employee uses Salesforce. It's important to find a CRM that is flexible and can grow with the organization. Technology can be expensive but is necessary to gather data and information from participants and provide services online. NAC negotiates technology discounts and receives a Salesforce nonprofit rate. Organizations like NAC need to view technology usage from a disability lens for both employees and users (participants). With this lens, it's important to know:

- Does the software have screen reader capabilities? And what other programs is it compatible with?
- How will the users be using the software? How easy is it for a diverse disability audience to use?
- Survey end-users on ease of use and accessibility.

NAC has three customer service desks that receive 2,000 calls a month, so it's important to have a streamlined and reliable CRM platform in place.

#### Recommendations, Considerations and Lessons Learned when Building and Adapted Sport Facility:

- NAC leadership suggests that a program be in place before building a facility.
- Volunteers are invaluable as their support keeps staff costs low.
- It's important to find the right people that align with the culture and believe in the mission.
- It would be great to have an adapted sport program platform that builds consistency across the industry rather than each program having to build their own technology solutions. Are there opportunities to build more shared services within the industry – waivers, registration processes, software programs?
- Be successful in a program before starting a new sport/program.

#### Challenges:

- The Ranch is part of a land preserve, so expansion is limited as to how many structures, concrete can be built on the preserve.
- It's helpful that the Ranch is right off the interstate, but transportation can be challenging for participants traveling from Salt Lake City to NAC.

# Turnstone Center

#### Staff members interviewed:

- Tina Acosta, CTRS, Director of Outreach
- Stasha Carrasquillo, Chief Marketing Technology Officer
- Michelle Kimpel, Director of Sports & Recreation
- Nancy Louraine, Former CEO (Retired)
- Colin Lyman, Director of Facilities
- Luke Morgan, Chief Operations Officer
- Mike Mushett, Chief Executive Officer
- Rena Shown, Chief of Development & Strategic Partnerships
- EJ Whitney, Director of Fitness, Aquatics & High Performance Sports

#### Organizational History:

Though Turnstone has undergone many changes since its founding in 1943 in Ft. Wayne, Ind., the organization's heart and soul have not changed. Turnstone remains committed to helping people with disabilities gain independence and live with dignity.

Turnstone was initially founded as a bedside teaching program through the Allen County Society for Crippled Children when the Junior League eliminated the education program. In 1947, the program was renamed and opened as the Hanna Homestead School for children with physical disabilities. The land and an existing structure was purchased in 1985 for the school with a financial gift to the organization. This land is where the current Turnstone campus was built and still operates today. In 1989, the Allen County Society for Crippled Children and Adults, Inc. was renamed the Turnstone Center for Disabled Children and Adults.

The 1980s and 90s brought a new focus for Turnstone – adaptive sport. Prior to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Turnstone's focus was on adult and pediatric therapy services. There was no focus on adaptive sports nor gym space to be able to host sport programs. Given the challenges of finding accessible and welcoming space for local disabled athletes, a successful capital campaign was launched in the mid-90s to build Turnstone's first gymnasium. Local athletes would now have a consistent location to practice and compete.

This new gym lacked many basic necessities of a typical gym such as hardwood floors for its basketball courts. Instead, athletes played on vinyl floors. It didn't take long for the organization to grow out of this initial gym and fitness space. In 2000, Turnstone added an indoor therapy pool, which was eventually filled in to centralize facility storage to increase storage for programming throughout the facility. Fifteen years later, Turnstone opened the Plassman Athletic Center (PAC) – a 125,000 square foot fieldhouse, fitness center, pool and office space that includes administrative offices and meeting rooms.



A quiet phase of the fieldhouse capital campaign started in the fall of 2011. The initial fundraising goal was \$10M but quickly became \$15M when Turnstone leadership decided to add another basketball court to the plan, going from three to four. Initially, community leaders wanted the fieldhouse to be built in downtown Fort Wayne, but in this scenario, Turnstone wouldn't own the land. Instead, Turnstone leaders purchased land for the fieldhouse around the therapy services campus. Still today, as opportunities arise, Turnstone continues to buy property around the campus to protect space for future expansions. Factoring in inflation and increases in construction costs, the exact same facility would cost approximately \$40M to build in 2024.

The Plassman Athletic Center (PAC) received \$5M as seed money for the facility from Ronald Plassman, a local business leader and supporter of Turnstone. The Plassman family is still very involved with Turnstone to this day. Mr. Plassman's daughter, who has a disability, serves on the Turnstone Board of Directors, and his wife volunteers weekly. Mr. Plassman passed away in 2022. His devotion to Turnstone continued in his death as he requested that his memorial be hosted at the PAC fieldhouse.

The City of Fort Wayne contributed \$2M to the fieldhouse capital campaign. The municipal funds were part of a federal grant program for new market tax credits. The remaining funds for the fieldhouse were raised locally. The community has a long philanthropic history with notable companies based in Fort Wayne, such as Sweetwater, Steel Dynamics, Inc., Parkview Health, and Lincoln Life Insurance. With the seed funding provided by the Plassman family and the generous support of the Fort Wayne community, the fieldhouse broke ground in June 2014 and opened debt-free in September 2015.

In 2018, three years after opening the expansion, Turnstone received the designation as an Olympic and Paralympic Training Site from the U.S. Olympic and

Paralympic Committee. Through a partnership with the U.S. Association of Blind Athletes (USABA) from 2015 to 2024, Turnstone was the resident training program for U.S. Men's and Women's Paralympic Goalball teams. With this resident program, USABA built two modular homes across the street from PAC to house athletes training with the national goalball team. Each modular home is 2,280 square feet. Following USABA's decision to move the goalball team training back to Colorado Springs, Turnstone is looking to use the resident homes as accessible lodging for teams or programs utilizing the PAC and/or recruit a new Paralympic sport to launch a resident training program in partnership with Turnstone. Campus lodging also offers another opportunity for revenue generation beyond local sport, recreation, and fitness memberships.

Turnstone is not just a sports and recreation facility; the organization offers a variety of therapy and support services to both children and adults throughout the region including:

- Adult & Pediatric Therapy (physical, speech, occupational therapies)
- Dr. Kimbrough Early Learning Center (KELC), a full-day inclusive childcare program
- Adult Day Services
- Adaptive Fitness
- Memory Care
- Equipment Loans
- Corporate Services & Consulting
- Support Groups

There is currently a waitlist of more than 400 individuals looking to receive services from Turnstone, mostly in adult day services and the early learning center.

With Turnstone's 80-year history, the organization is steeped in credibility and respect throughout the 11 counties it serves in northeast Indiana. And within its long-standing history, the organization has only had four CEOs in these 80+ years.

Turnstone is the only not-for-profit organization in the region that provides comprehensive services and programs, including physical, occupational, and speech therapy, inclusive childcare, adult day care service, memory care, wellness, adaptive sports, recreation, and facilities for persons with disabilities and their families.

In 2021, a Chief Operating Officer was hired to focus on Turnstone's sustainability. In 2021, 75 percent of the operating budget was dependent upon development/philanthropy, and 25 percent of the remaining expenses were covered by

## RESOURCES

[Link to Turnstone's 80+ year history.](#)

[Social Return on Therapy Investments Study Results](#)

operating revenue. This heavy reliance on development hinders organizational growth as development and philanthropy are not dependable income sources. In 2024, the split was 60 percent philanthropy/development and 40 percent operating revenue. In a few short years, the organization is certainly making strides toward the goal of 50 percent philanthropy/development and 50 percent operating revenue.

Turnstone’s operating income comes through various revenue streams including:

- Fees for services (self-pay, private insurance, Medicaid, Medicare)
- Fitness and Sports memberships
- Early Learning Center tuition
- Child and Adult Center Food Program (CACFP) reimbursement
- Facility Rental (long-term leases and hourly usage)
- Concessions

**Current Program Offerings and Services At-A-Glance:**

Turnstone’s PAC serves over 4,000 individuals annually. Of the people who benefit from its programs and services, many receive services at a reduced rate. Turnstone is the only organization in northeast Indiana that provides therapeutic services on a sliding-fee scale to persons with physical disabilities. Turnstone’s “Big Dream Project”, the Plassman Athletic Center, expanded the sports, recreation, and wellness programming for people with disabilities by adding more than 125,000 square feet to its facility. With the addition of PAC, Turnstone’s campus is now 195,000 square feet. The opening of the PAC served as a catalyst for growth and expansion in all programs, including therapy, adult day services, and memory care, hence the extensive waitlist for services.

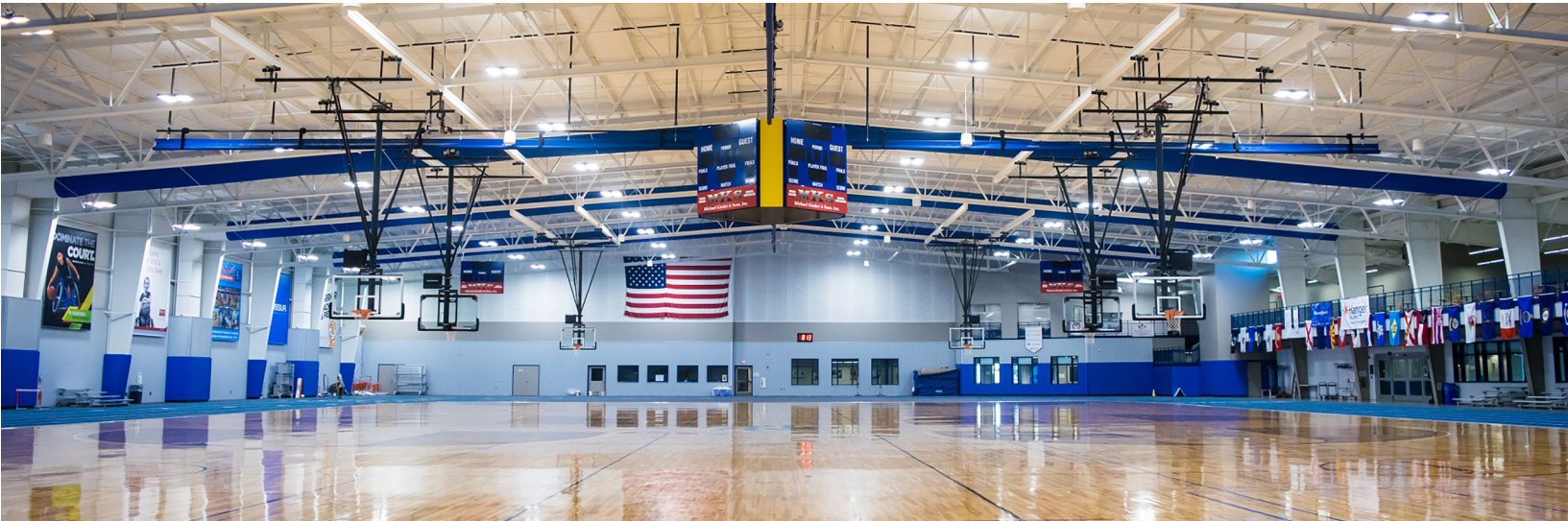
[Tour the PAC online \(video\)](#)

**Sport and Fitness:**

**PAC Fieldhouse**

Within the fieldhouse, the Turnstone sport and fitness amenities include:

- Four collegiate-sized wood floor basketball courts with scoreboards
  - Leadership designed the courts to have extra space in between each of the four courts to allow for power soccer chairs to move around easily.
- A 230-meter, six-lane indoor track with long jump, area for shot put, and high jump equipment



- As part of efficiency efforts within Turnstone, it used to take 20 hours – almost an entire day – to clean the indoor track. The organization invested in new equipment that has reduced the cleaning time to only two hours.
- PAC fieldhouse with spectator capacity for 1,700 people
- A concession stand and bistro seating area
- Nine administrative offices
- Five conference rooms
- Fitness center with two group exercise rooms and an elite athlete fitness area
- A 9,100 square foot warm water therapy pool with zero-depth entry, chair lift, transfer wall, and stairs
- Accessible locker rooms/showers and 3-family locker rooms
  - Some athletes who travel to Turnstone for events prefer the fieldhouse shower/locker rooms over those in their hotel rooms because of better accessibility.
  - Currently, PAC has 5,000 square feet in storage for sports and event equipment
- The original design of the PAC included 11 double outlets and 32 quad power outlets around the fieldhouse that can be used to charge power chairs and power soccer chairs. The additional outlets cost \$500,000 but were worth the additional expense to be able to host large power soccer tournaments.

There are a variety of membership levels and types within Turnstone that serve a diverse population with varying needs. Turnstone offers a competitive sports program for athletes interested in a higher level of competition. Equipment for

sport and recreation programs is stored in storage areas throughout the fieldhouse. Turnstone offers the following competitive sports programs:

- Wheelchair Basketball
- Wheelchair Rugby
- Sled Hockey
- Power Soccer
- Track & Field

There are also recreational sports opportunities in the following:

- Air Rifle
- Archery
- Boccia
- Cycling
  - Bike storage is in the fieldhouse. Members can ride some bikes on the indoor track. Volunteers help with bike maintenance.
- Table Tennis



**PAC Fitness Center**

In 2019, Turnstone and the YMCA of Greater Fort Wayne teamed up to offer inclusive programs for Turnstone members. Turnstone provided YMCA staff training on fitness equipment, along with disability awareness training, as members participate in various YMCA program offerings.

Staff heavily marketed the 10,594 square foot Turnstone Fitness Center in 2023-2024.

The marketing efforts have been intentional and educational to break down the stigma of disability that may keep people from joining Turnstone. Community members need to know that invisible disabilities are also welcome at Turnstone. The staff worked closely with healthcare providers in cardiac rehab, oncology clinics, and occupational and physical therapy offices. Fitness staff are also building relationships with teachers and counselors, working with the neurodiverse community. Staff utilize coding in their software platform to track disability types for grant applications and reporting.

The fitness center utilizes the Cybex accessible machines and also has a wheelchair treadmill, unique to Turnstone, built and donated by a local engineer. The average age of fitness center users is 62 years old, with 55 percent of members being women and 45 percent being men. Insurance and Medicare programs cover the cost of 52 percent of the members. All new members receive three private 1:1 training sessions when they join. The center had 600 members in 2022, and in 2024, the membership grew to 1,500.

Fitness Center features include:

- Moto Med machine to engage the active and passive range of motion
- Rowing ergs (with fixed seats)
- Standing frames
- 4 mat tables
- Group fitness room
- Consultation rooms for initial health assessments
- All fitness staff are ACSM C.I.F.T. and AdaptX certified and lifeguard certified
  - It's been challenging finding/retaining lifeguards, so all fitness staff are certified as lifeguards to be able to fill in as needed.
- A corner of the fieldhouse is dedicated to the thriving Rock Steady boxing program for individuals with Parkinson's. The program is headquartered in Indianapolis. The program had 35 participants in 2021 and in 2024 served 60 members. As an extension of the program, Turnstone also hosts the local Parkinson's support group.

**Turnstone Revenue Generation:**

Turnstone's operating budget has tripled from 2015 – 2024 due to a number of factors, including the opening of PAC, Turnstone's push for financial sustainability and desire to increase the volume of care in other programs, as well as inflation. In 2015, Turnstone's annual operating budget was \$3M. In 2024, Turnstone's annual operating budget had grown to \$9M.

As noted earlier, Turnstone has been working on creating an equal split with its operating budget to have half the budget funded by fees for service (therapies, rentals) and half funded by philanthropy (grants, events). In 2024, the operating budget had made progress in decreasing its dependence on philanthropy, nearing

the desired 50/50 split, freeing up additional funds for other organizational initiatives.

The Turnstone development department includes six full-time staff members who support more than just adapted sport programming. The department noted that corporate giving has decreased since COVID. The organization used COVID to react and adapt by shifting fundraising strategies, along with schedules for events and appeals. Turnstone also lowered the pricing of some special events to engage a younger audience who wants to attend and give but can't afford high-ticket events.

As of July 1, 2023, Turnstone became a line item in the Indiana state budget, receiving \$1M each year of the state's 2-year budget cycle. In 2024, the Turnstone Board approved the motion to establish a partnership with a federally qualified health center, and, as a result, Turnstone is now leasing space to the partner agency that operates a medical clinic to provide additional services for the community, including nurse practitioners, counselors, and developmental psychologists for children. The goal is to offer multiple healthcare services under one roof, creating

a "one-stop shop" for community members. This strategic move will generate revenue for Turnstone that will help offset the PAC's operating expenses.

Turnstone's annual capital budget for facility renovations can range from \$200k - \$2M/year. In FY 2024, \$1.3M of the capital budget was used for renovations of older areas of the campus (therapy services) and creating additional conference room space in PAC.

The fieldhouse brings in \$300,000 in revenue via annual facility rentals. Leadership is looking to grow this figure with more education and awareness of the fieldhouse amenities and opportunities. In 2024 alone, the organization hosted ten large, adapted sport events in PAC, including regional, national, and international competitions. There are an additional 20-30 events that rent the fieldhouse over



the course of a year. The calendar to rent the facility is reserved two years out, with Turnstone events always given priority. The benefit of bringing outside organizations into the PAC is that all event attendees, spectators, and athletes get to see and experience the facility.

#### Turnstone Team:

- As of March 2025 Turnstone has 124 staff (consisting of 80-90 FT, PT, and contractors)
- 25-member Board of Directors – There is a waitlist to serve on Turnstone's board.
- Turnstone leadership noted that the pandemic restacked the deck with regard to salaries, the market, and new staff demanding competitive wages. Turnstone is competing for quality staff with three large healthcare systems. It's important to protect the good people by providing them with competitive wage and a positive organizational culture.

#### Technology and Supporting Operations:

Turnstone PAC staff utilize EZFacility to manage fees and memberships related to fitness, aquatics, sports, recreation, and facility rentals. Through the software, staff can pull reports and distribute mass email blasts and notifications to segments within the membership. Clients can access the software using an app on their phone to view PAC announcements, program schedules, and check in to classes. Based on the uniqueness of Turnstone's data collection needs for grants and donors, the software poses some challenges, but staff acknowledge this is something they've experienced with any membership program they have explored. PAC staff have found the EZFacility team helpful and open to supporting Turnstone with troubleshooting.



#### Marketing and Outreach:

In its 80+ year history, Turnstone didn't hire a Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) until

2017. One of the CMO’s priorities is internal design and communications – creating consistency across the brand and ensuring it’s refined and polished. Turnstone has done such a fantastic job at branding and creating a professional look that some members didn’t even realize that Turnstone is a non-profit.

Marketing an organization like Turnstone can be challenging. From the very start, staff are battling the many stereotypes and assumptions about disability. Oftentimes, the message may be irrelevant if people don’t have a connection to disability. In addition, people in the community may not realize the range of services Turnstone offers. Local data notes that 80 percent of the community could use Turnstone’s fitness facility due to various health conditions, such as arthritis or diabetes. Bringing these community members into Turnstone helps break down the stigma around disability, with new members accepting supportive services. Due to consistent external marketing, the local healthcare community now has a better understanding of Turnstone’s services and is sending patient referrals regularly to Turnstone.

Some key milestones helped Turnstone’s marketing efforts. The organization changed overnight when PAC opened in 2015. Receiving the USOPC Training Site designation in 2018 also helped with external marketing.

In 2016, the Director of Outreach position was created to be a community resource and build awareness for Turnstone and disability inclusion across the community. In 2019, the position began to evolve into an advocacy and corporate services program. The corporate services program helps the Fort Wayne community become more inclusive through accessibility assessments for local businesses and community organizations. The program has also become a revenue generator through ADA assessments and audits, as well as serving as the ADA-Indiana affiliate working collaboratively with the Great Lakes ADA Center.

Turnstone’s CMO notes that it’s important to have staff in place for branding, communications, and advocacy while all being encompassed around a strategic marketing approach.

**Recommendations, Considerations, and Lessons Learned when Building an Adapted Sport Facility:**

Turnstone leadership have the opportunity to share many valuable insights and lessons learned since planning, building, and opening the Plassman Athletic Center. Below are some of the valuable recommendations for others to consider in their planning:

- Get away from the traditional non-profit model. Look for new ways to bring in revenue. Disability sport programs and memberships will not cover all expenses of operating an adapted sport facility. Transform into

- an organization that has a savvy and sophisticated business model.
- There MUST be a financial plan for both day-to-day operations and sustainability strategies. Give your staff, leadership, and board time to think about the sustainability of the organization over the long term.
- Be efficient in how you use facility space. Look at facility usage during weekday hours. How can you leverage available space as a revenue generator?
  - In 2024, Turnstone hired a consulting group to look at capacity revenue opportunities that included a review of event sponsor utilization and fieldhouse availability. In the analysis, Turnstone leadership learned that the fieldhouse utilization was less than half at 45 percent. They are now looking at strategies for increasing the usage of the fieldhouse with various groups, organizations, and businesses.
- Be relevant. Look at opportunities to provide a continuum of care – health and wellness, healthcare clinic, for-profit mental health services, etc.
- Bring in technology to support operations. A new electronic medical records (EMR) program enabled the conversion from paper tracking to electronic tracking of therapy services, enabling better reporting. Upon implementation of the new system, some services increased to 70 percent efficiency. Previously, some therapists were at 30 percent efficiency.
- Be honest with fundraising goals; 6 percent annual growth is realistic.
- Don’t chase the fundraising dollars – stay true to your organization’s mission.
- Staff would like an additional 1,000-2,000 square feet of storage, bringing total storage space to 6,000 – 7,000 square feet.
- As a new facility, don’t expect to host 10 large, adapted sports events annually. It will take time to build relationships and a reputation. Partnering with the local sports commission, tourism organization, or convention and visitors’ bureau is key to helping market your facility beyond the local region.
- Good maintenance staff are key to the success of an adapted sports facility.
- With the facility, think about:
  - Concession space (Is it accessible?)
  - Fire escapes for users that utilize the elevator (Can users get out safely in the event of an emergency?)
  - Self-closing bathroom doors and stalls that are larger than ADA standard
  - Snow removal (the material used needs to be mobility device-friendly)
  - Although polished concrete looks nice and is a smooth surface for those with mobility devices, it is also slippery and not the best for those who have issues with balance or use certain mobility devices.

- Get experts to help prepare the details and information upfront before you begin.
- Talk with and engage consumers and constituents in sharing ideas, thoughts, and feedback related to the facility design. These focus groups should include a diverse group of people with disabilities, such as:
  - Athletes with disabilities
  - Disability community, advocates, leaders
  - Construction
  - Architects
- Don't underestimate the number of staff needed.

**Challenges:**

These are some of the current challenges for Turnstone. Staff wanted to share these concerns so that other organizations are aware of items that can pop up despite the incredible success and growth of the organization.

- Turnstone has land available on campus for future expansion, but they realize they are running out of space.
- Parking has been a challenge, especially when Turnstone is hosting large events. The organization recently added 50-60 spaces across the street from the PAC.



# Additional Adapted Sport Facilities

We have provided a list of additional adapted sport facilities with links highlighting building amenities, features and videos showcasing accessible spaces.

We'll continue to update this list as we hear of new facilities being planned and built.

**Adaptive Sports Center**, Crested Butte CO  
[Kelsey Wright Building](#) – completed in 2019

**Challenged Athletes Foundation**, Boise ID  
[Idaho Outdoor Fieldhouse](#) – completed in Spring 2024

**Dream Adaptive Recreation**, Whitefish MT  
[Building New HQ and Operational Center](#) – to be completed in 2027

**Ignite Adaptive Sports (Eldora Mountain Resort)**, Boulder CO  
[Ignite Adaptive Sports Opens New HQ](#) – completed in 2024

**Mary Free Bed YMCA**, Grand Rapids MI  
First Universally Designed YMCA in the World – completed in 2015

- [Grand Rapids YMCA Accessibility](#)
- [Accessibility for All](#)
- [Universal Design and the Mary Free Bed YMCA](#)

**The Center for Individuals with Physical Challenges**, Tulsa OK – completed in 2019

The Center was established in 1957 by The National Council of Jewish Women in Tulsa to provide organized social, cultural and recreational opportunities for people with physical disabilities, specifically mobility, dexterity and sensory impairments. By 1959, a Board of Directors was formed, and The Center became a private, nonsectarian, nonprofit organization. Initially housed in the basement of Hillcrest Hospital, the first Center was built in 1967.

The Center moved into its current facility in 2005 and, in 2019, The Center opened the Hardesty Family Adaptive Sports Complex adding additional space to the already existing main building. In total, The Center offers 75,000 square

feet of space, including an adaptive fitness center, two gyms, a therapeutic pool, rock-climbing wall, adaptive yoga studio, horticulture classroom and garden, art and craft studios, computer lab and a track serving youth and adults.

[Adaptive Sports Program video](#)

**Vermont Adaptive Ski & Sports**

- Pico Mountain: [The Turtle Ridge Center, Home of Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports at the Andrea Mead Lawrence Lodge](#) – completed in 2013
- Sugarbush Resort / Mt. Ellen: [Murphy’s Annex at Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports](#) – completed in 2021

# Insightful Considerations

Building an adapted sport facility requires thorough planning, community engagement, financial support, and strategies for sustainability. Below are a few key takeaways and lessons learned from Ability360, Lakeshore Foundation, National Ability Center, and Turnstone for adapted sport leaders to consider when building an adapted sport facility:

**Start with the Program**

- Program First: Ensure that the facility is built to support existing programs. The success of a facility depends on its program strength and demand.
- Community Needs: Understand how the facility will fit within the larger ecosystem of your community. Consider community assets such as school districts, transportation, municipal leadership, colleges/universities, parks and recreation departments, and local healthcare systems.

**Design and Accessibility**

- Beyond ADA: Go above and beyond ADA requirements in facility design. Adapted sport facilities should be universally designed to be inclusive of everyone, creating a community center for all.
- Storage Space: All facilities noted the importance of ample storage space for adapted sport equipment.

**Financial Planning**

- Sustainability: Develop a financial plan for both day-to-day operations and long-term sustainability. Diversify revenue streams and understand how much is needed to cover daily operations of a facility. Set realistic fundraising goals and always stay true to the organization’s mission. Be cautious of mission creep.

**Facility Management**

- Maintenance Staff: Good maintenance staff is key to the success of an adapted sport facility. Invest in products and services that create efficiencies around facility maintenance

**Community and Stakeholder Engagement**

- Inclusive Planning: When planning to build an adapted sport facility, involve athletes, disability advocates, and future facility end-users in the design process. Engage diverse constituent groups in SWOT analyses and community meetings. Collaborate with disability advocates, leaders, and influencers to support the facility’s construction and program implementation.

**Technology and Operations**

- Software Solutions: Having accessible technology to support day-to-day operations is key to track and report facility activity. Implement a software program that can grow and adapt with the organization. Ensure the technology is accessible to all users.

**Leadership and Team Building**

- Passionate Team: Build a team that is passionate, hardworking, and authentic. Staff longevity creates consistency for members. Don’t underestimate the number of staff needed to support the facility and its programs. Prioritize the hiring of employees who are representative of the disability population.

By sharing the collective knowledge from leaders of successful adapted sport facilities, we hope to accelerate the growth of even more opportunities for disabled individuals to lead healthy and active lives through sport and recreation.

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