Introduction

World War II was the catalyst for the development of wheelchair basketball, and it successfully served the athletes by providing therapy, distraction, fitness, and a sense of normalcy. Ludwig Guttmann is often referred to as the father of wheelchair basketball. His patients were Holocaust survivors and World War II veterans. Numerous teams began surging across the United States. As wheelchair basketball became popular, the sport evolved and teams continued to form the National Wheelchair Basketball Association (NWBA).

Today, in the United States, there are 13 competitive collegiate wheelchair basketball teams at nine universities. These groups graduate three times more often than other students with physical disabilities.

Questions

1. What are the perceptions of students regarding their ability to set and achieve personal goals? Students with disabilities set 13% more personal goals than their peers without disabilities.
2. What are the perceptions of students regarding their ability to help others with disabilities? Students with disabilities help others with disabilities 40% more often than their peers without disabilities.

Independence

Being able to do some things on one’s own can be a challenge. Wheelchair basketball made a positive physical or mental impact on participants.

I think I might be able to do stuff on my own. (Tyler, 2012).

Support Systems

They’re [coaches] never not available. If I have a question, sometimes they aren’t. They’ve become stronger for me for my own care. (Tyler, 2012).

Choice and Opportunity

Wheelchair basketball offered an antidote.

My parents have been really isolation 1–3. Sometimes my brothers do... I also really enjoy watching basketball... I think I might be able to do more self-care... I’ve watched some of my friends with disabilities’ parents... I’ll let you know my parents’ do... (Mindy, 2012).

Trying New Things

Having the opportunity to play basketball kept that dream alive via the Paralympics. (Tyler, 2012).

Wheelchair basketball offered athletes the opportunity to try out for the Paralympics. (Mindy, 2012).

Advocacy

Being able to make informed decisions, understand legal rights, and ask for assistance is key to the needs of students. Wheelchair basketball made a positive physical or mental impact on participants.

I’m more willing to go to physicians and fight for what I want. (Tyler, 2012).

Navigating Barriers

People play games with us very helpful and find about doing things you need to do, but they really forced you to think about using your chair to get what you need or want on your own. (Tyler, 2012).

I look at how my teammates (who are stronger)... (Travis, 2013).

Role Models

I think we challenge what people think people with disabilities are able to do, but we are certainly far from perfect... (Abby, 2012).

I think from the first day on campus, the other players have been most helpful. I have taken my chair apart and used the body parts to fish... (Travis, 2013).

Asking for Help

I think I asked a lot of my own, it would be really hard... We have it pounded into our brains to be able to take care of things, and to give that up and let somebody else help you is a real challenge... (Travis, 2013).

Most of the time, I have a lot of help. Nobody really does much... (Abby, 2012).

Shaver states the impact bluntly: “We save lives,” he said. (Hendrickson, Random Determination, 2013, p. 31)