

# Handicapped join in on fitness boom

America's love affair with fitness, which has driven millions of ordinary people to take up running, swimming, biking, skiing and dozens of other active sports, is being shared by a growing number of extraordinary people who are surmounting their physical disabilities to enjoy the same healthful activities.

Men, women and children who have lost limbs, are blind, paralyzed or have to cope with other disabilities, have embraced the fitness movement with even more enthusiasm than able-bodied people. While enjoying the same physical benefits and joy of participation, these special athletes get much more out of sports. It has proven to be one of the most effective ways of helping them gain confidence to succeed equally well in everyday life, no matter what handicaps they may have to overcome.

Many organizations have set up sports programs for the disabled, and competitions are being held on local, national and even international levels. This June, more than 1,800 athletes from 54 countries competed in the International Games for the Disabled on Long Island. And just two weeks ago, millions of people watching the Olympic Games on TV were amazed to see wheelchair racers speeding around the track as fast as world-class runners.

While active sports and competitive events for the disabled may seem like a new phenomenon, it has been going on for a long time. But it didn't gain national interest and widespread participation until recently.

Both the Burke Foundation in White Plains and the 52 Association, which has a Sports and Recreation Center in Northern Westchester, have been practicing and preaching rehabilitation through sports for decades. As part of the Burke Foundation's year-round program, they teach wheelchair racing, basketball, table tennis, volleyball, swimming, archery and other sports. It is frequently the site of major competitions, such as the "Heels 'N' Wheels" road races, track and field events and basketball tournaments.

The 52 Association, a nonprofit group initially organized after World War II to help rehabilitate wounded veterans and later expanded to serve civilians as well, operates a 41-acre sports center in Ossining. It offers a large clubhouse, pool for swimming and diving, lake for rowing, regulation size basketball court, volleyball, paddleball, archery, batting cages, racing paths, tennis courts and facilities for dozens of other sports. For less active enjoyments there are shaded picnic tables, grills, secluded paths and fishing.

Last Sunday, when more than 200 members of the National Amputation Foundation and their families held their annual outing, there seemed to be as many sports events going on as during a busy day at the Summer Olympics. Wheelchairs sped back and forth across the basketball court, swimmers raced in the pool and a lively volleyball game was in progress. Trophies were then awarded to the best basketball foul shooters, leading hitters in the batting cage and winners of swimming races.

Dick Traum, who was the first runner with an artificial leg to race in the New York Marathon — and



has completed it five times since 1978 — demonstrated special running techniques for people with different disabilities. He is president of the Achilles Track Club, which teaches running and racing to a growing number of members in New York City.

"Learning how to race on an artificial leg is easy," he said. "The hard part is getting yourself into good enough cardio-vascular condition, but that's the hard part for every runner just getting started. Just be patient and develop a comfortable racing style of your own. Make adjustments to ease any discomfort. Be patient and you'll gradually work up to longer distances and a faster pace."

Members of the Achilles Track Club whom Traum helps with their training include Linda Down, the cerebral palsy victim who completed the last two New York Marathons on crutches; and John Paul Cruz, who was born with one leg and also ran the 1983 New York Marathon on crutches. They were each flown to Washington to be honored by the President after their accomplishments. Star of the club is Pat Griskun, an amputee who has run marathons as fast as 3 hours 44 minutes and is now training for the Iron Man Triathlon.

"You'd be amazed at what you can accomplish if you want it bad enough," Traum said. "I was inspired to take up running in 1976 when I watched Frank Shorter on TV as he won the Olympic Marathon in Montreal. I fantasized that one day I would beat Shorter in a marathon. Well I ran the New York Marathon in 1978. So did Shorter. He dropped out before the finish, so my dream of beating him came true in just two years."

Marty Barker of Yorktown, one of the wheelchair basketball players who works out regularly at the 52 Association camp, has come a long way in sports and in life since a sledding accident left him partially paralyzed eight years ago. He learned to play basketball and now stars on a wheelchair league team. He also races on the track at Burke and in many long distance road races held in Westchester. But Barker hasn't been too busy at sports to neglect his career. He just completed computer programming school.

Isabel Bohn, who is an expert oarswoman, horseback rider and skier, despite the fact that she lost a leg when she was 12,

demonstrated rowboat racing techniques to the National Amputation Foundation members. She described rowing as an ideal sport for just about everyone; it improves your all-around physical conditioning, satisfies the urge to compete and you can find great peace and joy gliding over the water.

The National Amputation Foundation outing is just one of dozens of summer picnics and sports days held by different organizations at the sports center during the summer. Disabled people and their families are there every day of the week swimming, boating, playing ball or just enjoying the peace and beauty of a day in the country.

Although the summer camp officially closes at the end of the September, other sports can still be enjoyed all year long: even ice skating, ice fishing and cross country skiing in the winter. The 52 Association also is famous for its Amputee and Blind Learn to Ski Clinics and races which it sponsors at ski areas throughout the East each winter.

Al Masullo, a trustee of the 52 Association who runs the Sports and Recreation Camp, explained that the total number of visits to the camp last summer added up to 8,500 days and he expects to top that number before this season is over.

For information about the 52 Association programs contact them at 441 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017, or phone 212-986-2581.

To find out more about the Achilles Track Club, write Dick Traum or Patty Parmalee, the Achilles Track Club, International Running Center, 9 East 89th St., New York, N.Y. 10128. You can phone them at 212-398-0348, or just show up at that address at 6:30 p.m. Wednesdays, when they hold their regular workouts.

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Friday, Sept. 21	10-12 noon - 6-8pm

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## Running schedule

(SASE Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope)

EVERY SATURDAY — Healthwalking/Recwalking Clinic. Free instructions start at 9 a.m. at parking lot across Bronx River Pkwy. from the County Center in White Plains. Call 914-263-2646.

SEPT. 3 — New Haven 20K Roadrace. Starts 8:30 a.m. at Elm St. near Temple at New Haven Green, New Haven. Entry fee \$10. No post entries. SASE to New Haven Road Race, Box 1072, New Haven, CT 06508. Phone 203-281-1060.

SEPT. 8 — Philipstown 10,000 Meter Road Race. Starts 10 a.m. at Kemble Ave., Cold Spring. Pre entry \$3, post entry \$4. SASE to Garrison-Cold Spring Race Committee, Rt. 71, Cold Spring, N.Y. 10516.

SEPT. 8 — Norwalk Summer Road Race Series final. Marathon starting at 8 a.m. at Fox Run Elementary School. No registration fee. Phone Tim Scheibel of Norwalk at 203-838-0500.

SEPT. 9 — Tuckahoe 3 Miller & 2 Mile Fun Run. Starts 8:30 a.m. at Tuckahoe Community Center, Columbus Ave. Entry fee \$3, post entry \$4. SASE to Run for Fun, Village Hall, 45 Main St., Tuckahoe, N.Y. 10707. Phone 914-961-3100.

SEPT. 9 — Westchester Triathlon. 1/2 mile swim, 14 mile bike and 4 mile run. Starts 9:30 a.m. at Rye Playland and finishes at White Plains High. Ironperson and teams. Contact Andy Kimerling, Westchester Road Runners, 914-682-0437.

SEPT. 9 — Redbook Run. 3 mile race and 1/4 mile pee-wee run. Starts 9:45 a.m. at 67th St. and West Park Drive near Tavern on the Green in Central Park. SASE to Redbook Run, NYRR, Box 881, PDR Station, New York, N.Y. 10150.

(For listing in schedule, send entry information well in advance to Mort Kail, Sports, Westchester-Rockland Newspapers, 150 Gannett Dr., White Plains, N.Y. 10604.)