



# Helping Every American Learn to Be Healthy

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On Thursday mornings, you can walk into the Hartman Community Center (pre-flood) in Nashville and see about 60 adults, ages 22 to 65, stepping to the music, strengthening their biceps, crunching their stomachs, running relays and even dancing. When the whistle blows, the group moves in organized chaos around the circuit to get a good balance of cardio and strength training. Project HEALTH has partnered with Metropolitan Parks and Recreation to provide an adaptive circuit training class for the Friends of Metro Parks Disability Program. This class is fully inclusive for all abilities and is open to the public. Day programs serving adults with disabilities are invited to attend the class for a quality community outing that incorporates much needed physical activity, socialization and fun.

Project HEALTH is an innovative recreational program designed for people of all abilities to have the opportunity to live a healthy lifestyle. Project HEALTH is a program of Sports 4 All Foundation (S4AF), founded in 2005. S4AF's mission is to *improve the quality of life of individuals with disabilities by providing funding, equipment, programming and education to enable full participation in sports and recreational activities*. Sports 4 All has had a longstanding relationship with Nashville's Metro Parks and Recreation through equipment distribution, and S4AF's founder, Kris Salisbury, has a daughter who attends the Parks and Recreation Disability Program. Project HEALTH has been leading classes with Metro Parks and Recreation since March 2009 and has held classes at Hartman Community Center, Coleman Community Center, Sportsplex and West Park.

*"Your ideas and hopes for this project are just the support that we need to offer new and innovative programming. What a great concept to connect universities, health care professionals and the nonprofits! Thank you for your vision with this project."* (Cathy Rader, Metropolitan Board of Parks and Recreation)

Project HEALTH teaches community-based classes because they are a win-win for everyone. The community centers are able to offer additional classes to the facility at no



additional cost to them. Agencies who serve the disabled population are able to find additional outlets for recreation for their consumers. Volunteers from the community are able to serve the community in a very fun and practical way, also creating awareness to the barriers that the disabled population face with the rights to healthy opportunities. For example, a group of 30 high school students volunteered with our Circuit Training class. This is an e-mail from one of the parents:

*"Thank you for allowing the 11th-graders the opportunity to go to Sports 4 All yesterday for their community service project. My son was very touched by these individuals, and I truly believe it will make him a better person. The stories he told last night about these children made him very emotional. He says he realizes now that having fun and acting silly with them was like having fun with his own friends. Thanks again for such a wonderful opportunity."*

Most importantly, the participants benefit from the classes; they have recreational opportunities that not only benefit them physically but are also necessary for mental and emotional well-being. The group atmosphere provides community involvement, peer motivation, self-confidence and the recreation that every adult requires to live an optimal standard quality of life. We watch as the "think-I-can" attitude takes over, and individuals challenge themselves to reach new goals. We held one gentle-

man's hand as he overcame his fear of steps on the aerobic stepper and shocked his staff member with his new abilities. We notice some participants come in with a frown, but by the time they get done exercising around the circuit and dancing for cardio, they are all smiles. We smile when we see participants high-fiving each other and encouraging their peers as they reach new milestones. We are inspired by the abilities each person has and the determination that appears when individuals are given the motivation and opportunity to succeed. Community-based classes also help us fulfill our value of making sure recreation is available to ALL people, which means these classes are FREE based on first-come, first-serve.

Project HEALTH thanks Metro Parks and Recreation in Nashville for the successful partnership in providing these opportunities. We are also excited about our partnership with The Council on Developmental Disabilities in efforts to expand statewide. Please contact us about how Project HEALTH can be involved in your community. We offer community-based classes as well as contracted services and host community events. Join us in Helping Every American Learn to be Healthy — Project HEALTH.

*For more information, stop by our booth at the TRPA Conference in Murfreesboro, visit [www.s4af.org](http://www.s4af.org), or call (615) 354-6454.*