

# **Community-Based Leisure Activities for Youth (CLAY)**

## **Molding Students with Special Needs toward a Lifetime of Fitness**

The CLAY program is a component of Leon County Schools Exceptional Student Education and is part of an instructional delivery model for exceptional students who can benefit from educational instruction in the community. Students included are those who are on Special Pupil Progression Plan (working toward a special diploma) and those students with autism for whom skill development in the community is a priority educational need. Students participating in CLAY practice skills in their school classroom before applying and mastering these skills in community settings. CLAY is a program that emphasizes developing skills and knowledge that are needed for students to successfully participate in community recreation and leisure activities and also serves as a training venue for Special Olympics.

### **Mission**

The mission of the CLAY program is to provide leisure activities that encourage students' fitness in community settings. To meet this goal, CLAY has two primary areas of focus. The first is individual fitness, and students are taught to utilize leisure activities to attain and maintain fitness. The second area of focus is on building community partnerships that foster participation of special needs students outside of school hours. Becoming a member of the larger community is an important goal for students with special needs to achieve. Leisure activities provide an ideal venue to increase community involvement. In CLAY skills needed to participate in many leisure activities are taught and practiced during school time and are then generalized into a community setting. Partnerships will be formed between the CLAY program and community sports clubs and other organizations. These partnerships will include both in-school and out-of school activities.

### **Unified Partner Sports Program**

Special Olympics Unified Sports® is an initiative that combines approximately equal numbers of Special Olympics athletes and athletes without intellectual disabilities (called Partners) on sports teams for training and competition. Age and ability matching of athletes and Partners is defined on a sport-by-sport basis.

The CLAY Program and Special Olympics Unified Sports Programs provide athletes with the opportunity to:

- learn new sports
- develop higher-level sports skills
- have new competition experiences
- experience meaningful inclusion (each athlete is ensured of playing a valued role on the team)
- socialize with peers and form friendships (the initiative provides a forum for positive social interaction between teammates and often leads to long-lasting friendships), and
- participate in their communities and have choices outside of Special Olympics. Unified Sports programs often are initiated by school sports teams and clubs, community partners, including parks and recreation departments, and community sports organizations. These partnerships help further include athletes in their community.

### **Training Partner Program**

The training partner program is an essential part of the CLAY program and involves partnering special needs students with community members. These community members act as training partners with students with special needs. These partnerships may have many different forms and might range from assuring that the student is aware of community activity opportunities on a weekly basis to actually training with the student after school and taking him or her to a community event. Parent participation with the community partner is also strongly recommended.

### **Special Needs of the CLAY Participants**

Every participant in the CLAY program has one or more documented disabilities which may be cognitive, physical or a combination of the two. Cognitive disabilities range from severe to mild mental retardation, and physical disabilities include medical conditions such as cerebral palsy, seizure disorders, paralysis, cardio respiratory disorders, etc. Information on the partnered student's condition(s) will be provided to community partners as allowed under confidentiality restrictions.

## CLAY Program Activities

Students in the CLAY program currently have a choice to participate in the following activities. Activities will change based on community offerings and student participation.

Aquatics	Disc Golf
Basketball	Lifetime Fitness through the Arts
Bocce	Gymnastics
Bowling	Golf
Cheerleading/Dance	Soccer
Volleyball	Unified Partner Sports
Footsteps to Fitness	Racquet Sports
Softball	Power lifting
Pep Band	Motor Training Activities Program (MATP)
Environmental Education Activities	Horticulture Activities
Track and Field	Target Bowling
Tennis	Equestrian

## Facilities

Currently the following facilities are utilized for CLAY activities:

Dade Street Community Center	Walker Ford Community Center
Florida State University Athletics	Tom Brown Park
Jack McLean Community Center	City of Tallahassee
Lafayette Park Community Center	Capital Lanes
Leon County Schools	Seminole Bowl
Palmer Monroe Community Center	Crenshaw Lanes

## Current Partners/Contributors

Many thanks to our current partners and contributors:

Florida A&M University	USTA Tennis Association
Florida State University	City of Tallahassee
Gretchen Everhart School	Tallahassee Parks and Recreation Department
Leon County Schools Transportation Department	Special Olympics Leon County
Leon County Schools ESE Department	Special Olympics Florida
Leon County Sheriff's Office	Patients First

## Ways to get Involved in the Program

Want to get involved? We encourage you to consider any or all of the following:

- Make a donation—of money, equipment, uniforms, supplies, or time
- Become a Unified Partner
- Volunteer during CLAY school activities (currently held on Friday mornings)
- Fundraising/sponsorship



For more information about **CLAY** or **Special Olympics**, please contact **Melba Jacobs** at (850) 487-9855 or by email at [jacobsm@mail.leon.k12.fl.us](mailto:jacobsm@mail.leon.k12.fl.us).