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***Congratulations Chazy Girls
2013 National Champions***



OUR 2013 NATIONALS ISSUE



Coaching
With
Chuck
Gridley

*A Special Article Submitted by Chuck Gridley,
Written by Dr. JoAnne Castagna, Ed.D.*

**ARMY CORPS CIVILIAN BUILDS UP
WOUNDED WARRIORS WITH SLED
HOCKEY PROGRAM**

Hockey truly is for “every body”. I have the honor of coaching a sled hockey team in Syracuse, NY. We recently participated in a



tournament in Canton, NY that was put together by an old friend of mine, Mark McKenna. Mark is doing some great things with the Wounded Warriors Program at Ft. Drum. JoAnne Castagna, Ed.D. wrote a nice article about the Canton event that I thought I would share. Enjoy the article!

Army Corps civilian builds up Wounded Warriors with sled hockey program

Last year, Mark McKenna, a project engineer with the Fort Drum Field Office of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New York District was working out at the gym at Fort Drum in Wattertown, N.Y.

“I was working out in the gym and a Soldier in a wheelchair came in and then turned around and left the gym. I asked the manager what do they do for the disabled, because they cannot reach the pull up bar nor the dumbbells. She told me that they had nothing organized for them.”

McKenna felt that more could be

done for these Wounded Warriors. He began to research what he could do. Since he is a major hockey fan and has been a volunteer hockey coach for over 30 years, he came up with the idea of forming a sled hockey team at Fort Drum for these disabled Soldiers. He had

learned through his research that sled hockey is an adaptive sport for the disabled to play ice hockey.

He and a team of volunteers quickly went to work to form a team, find equipment and train them up.

Recently, the “Mountain Sled Warriors (Wounded Warrior Unit - WTU)” held their first sled hockey tournament with great success. The donation-only fundraiser benefits Fort Drum’s Warrior in Transition Unit at Fort Drum, sled teams from Albany, Syracuse, Ottawa and the U.S. Army’s Wounded Warrior Project.

“These tournaments are a great way to help the Soldiers get back in touch with their community and for the community to thank them for their service for our country,” said McKenna.

“During the tournament the Wounded Warriors forgot about their disability and learned a new sport or found out that they can still play hockey in a different way. Also they had fun doing some team building. They all had smiles on their faces; it was like they were kids again.”

McKenna is supported by the Society of American Military Engineers (SAME) Fort Drum Chapter, Canton Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)



Post 1231, the Knights of Columbus, as well as many businesses, universities and pro hockey stars that donated their money and equipment, such as sleds and specially designed hockey bags and

jerseys.

The tournament took place at the SUNY Canton’s Roos House rink. The WTU team was composed of 24 male and female Soldiers that played a round-robin tournament with other Wounded Warrior teams from Albany, N.Y. (“Capitol District Warriors”),



Syracuse, N.Y. (“CNY Flyers”) and Ottawa (“Ottawa Valley Falcons”).

The games began with the national anthems for Canada and the U.S. and color guard marches from the VFW-Post 1231 and Clarkson University’s Reserve Officer Training Corps. The games ended with a party and special dinner, raffle, silent auction and the awarding of medals and trophies.

The Wounded Warriors benefit from the tournament in multiple ways:

Strengthens Soldier bond

WTU team player Staff Sergeant, Matthew Butler said, “The best part of playing for me was seeing all the Soldiers having fun together and working as a team.” Butler was injured while on an air assault mission in Iraq of 2007.

“The camaraderie between hockey fans and players is unlike any other sport. Playing with Wounded Warriors takes this one step further, we are brothers in arms and brothers on the ice,” said Sergeant, Elijah Haslage, a WTU goalie.

Strengthens body

Haslage said, “I like this event because it gives those who love hockey but can’t play anymore the chance to get back on the ice, no matter the disability.”

“Sled hockey also brings a whole new challenge to the game of hockey for someone like me that has played hockey,” said Butler. “Even though the rules and fundamentals are the same, being in a sled gives that feeling of learning and being challenged as though you have never played hockey before. In other words, I found myself learning a whole new skill set but still playing the game I love, hockey!”

WTU team player Staff Sergeant, Wautash Grillett said,

“It was exhilarating to be that combative in a sporting event from feeling as frail as I had been since being injured.” Grillett spent nine and half months at Walter Reed Army Medical Center after a leg injury in Afghanistan.

Builds Confidence

Wautash said, “It gives individuals the ability to be part of a full contact sport that builds their self confidence and provides them a sense of accomplishment in the game. It’s truly a no loser sport.”

Provides a distraction

“I think it is a good distraction for a lot of Warriors that have a lot on their plates; they have the looming transition out of the Army, painful conditions, and numerous doctors’ appointments. It is good to forget for the few hours you are on the ice,” said Haslage.

Butler said, “Soldiers who at one time were training to kick in doors and then deployed and had to face the reality behind those doors to protect and serve a country they love, are now returning with limitations. Anything that makes them forget about those limitations for a few moments and builds cohesion as a team once again with a common goal or interest (and love every minute of it) is what these Soldiers need!”

Butler continued, “It truly is a blessing to know that the “North Country” of upstate, New York not only cares about our Soldiers, as we have always known, but really goes out of their way to make a difference in these Soldiers lives at such a crucial time for many.”

McKenna said, “The event would not have been possible without the overwhelming support and generous donations from the entire community. Donations from this recent tournament will help us purchase new equipment including 30 sleds.”

McKenna added, “These tournaments have shown me that Wounded Warriors can do anything they put their minds to. They just need an opportunity. These guys and gals put their lives on the line for us. The Army Corps builds buildings and facilities for them. This event brings us together.”

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(Photos compliments Laurie Kennedy)†