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KIDS ENJOY EXERCISE NOW

st. louis

GREETINGS!

Dear KEEN friends,

Welcome to the inaugural KEEN St. Louis newsletter, KEEN Insight!

At KEEN, we're proud of our athletes, and we're excited to share with you the story of one of our athletes and how KEEN has helped him succeed. For our volunteer coaches, we've included an article that describes tips and suggestions for coaching youth with disabilities, particularly those who are on the autism spectrum. If you are new to KEEN, you'll find information on our history and our programs. And for everyone, there are stories about recent and upcoming KEEN events, KEEN supporters, and a profile of one of our wonderful volunteer coaches.

Enjoy!

A Brief History of KEEN

KEEN is modeled on an innovative program established in Oxford, England by Elliott Portnoy, who brought KEEN to the Washington, DC area in 1992. With help from a handful of parents and volunteers, KEEN started as a single sports program. Now, because of careful attention to the needs of athletes, their families, and volunteers, KEEN serves hundreds of young people with disabilities and offers a wide range of programs and activities.

[Click here to learn more about the history of KEEN.](#)

KEEN Programs

All of KEEN's programs are based on a simple principle: pair a trained volunteer with an athlete and let them discover together how much they can do. KEEN St. Louis offers two programs: KEEN Sports, with two groups of athletes participating in sessions twice a month, and KEEN Swim, with one group of athletes participating in one session a month. Both KEEN programs occur on Sunday afternoons.

[Click here to learn more about KEEN's programs.](#)

KEEN Kids



Brian started coming to KEEN two years ago, shortly after receiving a diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome. His family had struggled with engaging him in an activity and was frustrated that Brian did not have anyone that he would call a good friend. Brian's parents were looking for a place where Brian could socialize with same-age peers as well as a program that could offer Brian a mentor that would model proper social skills, facilitate cooperative group play, and encourage physical activity. In addition, his parents hoped to find opportunities to meet other parents of children who were on the autism spectrum. They found all this in KEEN. As Brian's dad shared with us, KEEN helped him and his wife network with other parents and, more importantly, Brian found an activity that he looked forward to attending, made new friends, and gained a

better understanding of his skills and abilities.

Brian has been able to transfer the skills he learned at KEEN to other situations - he has developed new friendships at school and now participates in a fully-integrated swim team and hockey team. He has taken on a leadership role of coaching other youth in a baseball program, and he hopes to one day volunteer at KEEN as a coach, working with younger athletes and encouraging them to make new friends and develop new skills. His parents credit KEEN's one-to-one coaching as giving him the chance to focus on his independent development, at a pace matched with Brian's needs, while also providing an opportunity for fun group activities.

We would like to hear from our athletes! If you are a KEEN athlete, or parent/guardian of a KEEN athlete, and would like to submit a story or drawing about your experiences with KEEN or be featured in a future newsletter, please contact our Director, Kelle Franklin, at info@keenstlouis.org, 314.259.5980.

Coach Corner

Our "Coach Corner" for this issue features Kim Morgan. Kim is the Marketing and Legal Recruitment Administrator for the law office of Sonnenschein, Nath, & Rosenthal, a member of KEEN's Board of Directors, and a KEEN coach.

How did you get involved with KEEN? Through my job - our firm's chairman is the founder of KEEN, and when KEEN expanded to St. Louis in 2005, I heard about it through work. I've been a coach at KEEN Sports and a member of the Board of Directors since that time.

What is something unique about you? I grew up in Oregon and like to go white water rafting.

What is your favorite local restaurant? Robust in Webster Groves and Dewey's in Kirkwood

What's on your book shelf? The Secret Life of Bees by Sue Monk and The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini

What's in your iPod/CD changer? Janet Jackson, U2, Sheryl Crow, Peter Gabriel (I need to update it but I don't know how!)

Who is a professional athlete that you admire? There are several athletes I admire, but especially those who give back to their communities and have set up foundations to help those in need, such as Albert Pujols and Jackie Joyner-Kersey.

What is your favorite sport to play or watch? Playing tennis, and St. Louis Cardinals baseball to watch, though I'm now getting into hockey

Did you play any sports as a kid? Track and field, cheerleading

What is your favorite activity to do at KEEN? Shooting baskets with the athletes



Thanks to the Cardinals Care Foundation for our new handcycles!



You might have noticed that the athletes at KEEN Sports have been getting around the gym using only their arms and three wheels. Thanks to the generosity of the St. Louis Cardinals Care Foundation, KEEN recently purchased two handcycles, which are similar in form and function to a bicycle, but powered by the arms and upper body strength. The handcycles also have a flat, padded seat bottom with supporting padded back, and youth that need extra support can be strapped into the seat with a chest strap.

Our handcycles are designed for recreational use, with two coasting rear wheels and one front wheel, which is steerable and powered by a circular motion of the arms using

the hand cranks. Many of the youth served by KEEN have limited physical mobility and experience balance and coordination difficulties as a result of their disabilities. The Cardinals Care handcycles give these youth, and all the youth at KEEN, a unique opportunity to participate in bike-riding and a chance to feel a sense of pride and accomplishment as they master a new athletic skill.

We also wish to thank REI's Brentwood, Missouri store for donating a bicycle lock and bicycle helmets, which will ensure our athletes have a safe experience riding the handcycles.

Thanks to Variety, the Children's Charity of St. Louis, for its support of KEEN!

KEEN was a recent recipient of a \$4800 grant from Variety, the Children's Charity of St. Louis (<http://varietystl.org>). These funds will go directly towards supporting the KEEN Sports program by providing for a portion of our annual facility rental fee and program insurance. We are pleased to be able to partner with Variety, as their mission – to serve children with physical and mental disabilities in the greater St. Louis region, whose needs would not be met were it not for Variety's sustained commitment – matches what we are doing at KEEN. Thanks Variety!



KEEN Bowl-A-Thon Raises over \$6,000 for KEEN Programs

The 2nd Annual KEEN St. Louis Bowl-a-thon was held on Saturday, September 27th at Olivette Lanes in Creve Coeur, Missouri. Over 80 bowlers, friends, family, and KEEN supporters gathered together for a fun afternoon of bowling, food, games, and prizes. A highlight of the event was the presence of KEEN Supporter and 2008 Olympic Gold Medalist, Lori Chalupny. Lori signed autographs, took pictures, and still managed to bowl a great game!

Mike Herndon, a KEEN Sports athlete, was the winner of the grand prize raffle and took home a new iPod shuffle player and \$50 iTunes gift card. Other raffle winners and game winners took home gift cards to local restaurants and stores.

Thanks to the support of so many wonderful people, over \$6000 was raised at the bowl-a-thon for KEEN programs through tickets, pledges, donations, and a raffle. We hope to see you next fall at the 3rd Annual KEEN St. Louis Bowl-a-thon.



Thanks to all of our 2008 supporters!

[To see a complete list of the 2008 supporters, click here.](#)

COACHING ATHLETES WITH AUTISM

Autism is a developmental disability that is part of the autism spectrum disorders. Other diagnoses that are classified as part of the autism spectrum include Asperger Syndrome, Rett Syndrome, Pervasive Developmental Disorder, and Childhood Disintegrative Disorder. The disorders vary in their degree of impairment and symptom presentation. Of these disorders, autism is most frequently diagnosed, with a prevalence rate of 1 in 150 individuals.

[For more information on autism and helpful hints for working with athletes with autism, click here.](#)

What's Happening at KEEN

Upcoming KEEN Sports sessions:

Sunday, March 8th
Sunday, March 22nd
Sunday, April 26
Sunday, May 17
Sunday, May 31
Sunday, June 14 (outside)
Sunday, June 28

Upcoming KEEN Swim sessions:

Sunday, March 1st (at Kirkwood YMCA)
Sunday, April 5
Sunday, April 19
Sunday, May 3

KEENfest:

Join us Friday, May 1st, 2009 for the inaugural KEENfest! This event, to be held at the restaurant Fifteen (www.15stl.com), will be a time of celebrating KEEN programs, athletes, and volunteers while raising funds to support KEEN programs through a great auction event. Visit our website at www.keenstlouis.org for more information. We hope you will join us!

[Want to see KEEN in action? Check out this video from KEEN USA.](#)

Thank you once again for all of your support!

Sincerely,
KEEN St. Louis

About Kids Enjoy Exercise Now (KEEN):

Our mission at KEEN is to foster the self-esteem, confidence, skills and talents of our athletes through non-competitive activities, allowing young people facing even the most significant challenges to meet their individual goals. We do this by accepting all youth – even those with more profound and severe disabilities – and pairing them one-to-one with a volunteer coach for fun recreational opportunities, which are offered at no cost to our athletes.

KEEN has affiliates in Washington DC, Chicago, Kansas City, St. Louis, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Phoenix, and New York City.

Contact us:

P.O. Box 69010 ▪ St. Louis, Missouri, 63169 ▪ <http://www.keenstlouis.org> ▪ info@keenstlouis.org
▪ 314.259.5980

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PO Box 69010
Saint Louis, Missouri 63169



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