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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEDSRA Announces Free Fitness Program for Veterans Returning from Active Duty with a Disability

Addison, IL, January 8, 2010—Thanks to NEDSRA (Northeast DuPage Special Recreation Association) and Club Fitness, a group of veterans having recently returned from active duty with disabling injuries have reason to look forward to the new year with a positive outlook and a proactive plan to regain their physical well-being.

Through the cooperative efforts of NEDSRA, Club Fitness of the Addison Park District, Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago and US Paralympics, a select group of veterans have been quietly testing a new pilot program called *Healthy Minds, Health Bodies* in this western suburb of Chicago since last fall. Spearheaded by NEDSRA as part of its Veterans' Fitness Initiative, the program is offered free-of-charge to qualifying veterans returning from active duty with a disability.

Each participant received a full year Fitness Pass for themselves and a workout partner to Club Fitness, personal training sessions with a trainer certified to work with disabled veterans, post-rehabilitative exercise materials for home use, and expert advice to support their path to fitness. In addition to the fitness components of the program, participants and their families are offered several social activities per year to help them meet and foster a supporting network with others facing similar challenges.

One of the first to register for the program was Army SPC Steve Baskis. The former infantryman was on his way back to Baghdad on May 13, 2008 when a roadside bomb exploded near his armored vehicle. Shrapnel from the blast hit the side of Steve's head and other parts of his body, leaving him not only wounded, but blind.

"I knew that I could feel sorry for myself. But that's not me. I just wanted to get better," said Steve Baskis in a video interview soon after returning stateside.

In fact, Steve's desire to get better has driven the young soldier to become an advocate for programs that will help others like him get their lives back on track. Today, as he works through his fitness program with his personal trainer, he also trains hard toward his goal of joining the 2012 US Paralympics team as a cyclist. He schedules his personal training at Club Fitness around his training camps for US Paralympics.

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Through the program, Club Fitness personal trainers worked with the Rehabilitation Institute to become certified in the use of adaptive fitness equipment and with specialized techniques that will allow them to adapt personal training exercises to each participant. The goal, according to organizers, is to take the veteran as far as possible through an individualized training plan, while preparing him or her to continue their training on their own.

Working with the veterans and the variety of disabilities they have is challenging but rewarding noted Club Fitness trainer Joe Sinople. He is one of the initial trainers who made the commitment to become certified for the course.

The personal training component of the program, as well as its “no-fee” appeal, is what makes the program so unique. While other fitness facilities and agencies offer military discounts, NEDSRA and its 11 member partner communities have taken their support for our military heroes a step further by implementing the *Healthy Minds, Healthy Bodies* program throughout their districts.

“This program can make a huge impact on the lives of these veterans. Just think about the adjustments they, their families and friends must make when they get back home from active duty with a disability,” said NEDSRA Superintendent of Recreation, Lisa Deets. “Through this program, we hope to ease that adjustment period for them and for their families by giving them the tools to work proactively together.”

More importantly, organizers see the program as having the potential to become portable and easy to implement in other communities. Said Deets, “As the program grows, we see enormous potential for it to be replicated locally, regionally or even nationally. Should this be the case, we are looking forward to sharing our experience.”

Applications for new participants are now being accepted. For more information, contact Lisa Deets, NEDSRA Superintendent of Recreation, 630-620-4500, ext. 140.

The program’s operational costs are partially underwritten by grants from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity and the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation. Veterans with a 10% or more disability rating from the Department of Veterans Affairs can qualify. An initial consultation with NEDSRA’s Veterans Adaptive Recreation Specialist is also required to determine whether this program will fit the veteran’s needs.

ABOUT NEDSRA

NEDSRA is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization that offers recreational and leisure programs for adults and children with disabilities in the communities of Addison, Bensenville, Butterfield Park District, Glendale Heights, Itasca, Lombard, Medinah, Oakbrook Terrace, Schiller Park, Villa Park and Wood Dale. Visit www.nedsra.org or call 630-620-4500 for more information.

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