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MEDIA RELEASE

North Delta Soccer and Baseball Clubs Team Up to Offer Accessible Multi-Sport Programs

Delta, British Columbia – June 1, 2021: North Delta Football Club (NDFC) and North Delta Baseball Association (NDBA) are collaborating on a new, multi-sport program designed for youth with disabilities, for Fall 2021 in North Delta. Children and teens will be able to take part in the **Challenger Sports Clinic:** an outdoor soccer and baseball combo program with on-field support from community volunteers. The partnership is an important first step in developing an inclusive sports community for all individuals in North Delta, and supports the vision of National AccessAbility Week, celebrated this May 30 to June 5.

“This year’s theme ‘Disability Inclusion 2021: Leaving No One Behind’ is in line with the Government of Canada’s plan to build back better. It expands on the disability-inclusive approach, initiatives and measures the Government has taken throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.” – National AccessAbility Week (<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/campaigns/national-accessability-week.html>)

The NDFC and NDBA community sports associations both see an unmet need in North Delta for a wide range of sports programs for children and teenagers with disabilities. While some can participate in existing programs with some extra support, other would-be participants require additional program modifications to provide a positive experience that keeps them coming back each season.

“It’s extremely important for our community to provide an environment for everyone to enjoy sport,” says Mark Kerr, NDFC Vice President. “As the saying goes, it takes a village...but we can get a simple program started and then put together a 1 - 2 - 3 year plan to grow, including other local sports associations, and ultimately, give these kids an experience they will never forget.”

The NDBA has experienced several years of success with their Challenger Baseball program, which will form a launching point for expanded adaptive sports programs in North Delta. Run each spring as part of a national program, Challenger brings together school-age kids and young adults, with a range of disabilities including Down syndrome, autism, and cerebral palsy. The on-field program relies on the donation of time from community members who volunteer their time to be 1-1 buddies with athletes.

“The Challenger program is a fantastic program that lets kids do what they love: swinging the bat, running the bases, having fun and making friends,” says Sheryl Gray, NDBA Challenger Division Representative. “The amazing side benefit has been the coming together of community, from families of kids with disabilities making new connections to our energetic volunteers who are eager to share their love of sport and make a difference in a child’s life – many of these volunteers are youth themselves.”

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“Diversity is a fact. Equity is a choice. Inclusion is an action. Belonging is an outcome.” – Arthur Chan