

New Fund Assists Student-Athletes with Disabilities and Disabled Veterans

Thursday, February 21, 2013

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Marty Scarano, UNH Director of Athletics; Stephen Hardy and Donna Hardy, parents of Nate Hardy; Sgt. Christy Gardner, retired U.S. Army sergeant, member of UNH sled hockey team and U.S. National Team; Keely Ames, Northeast Passage operations coordinator; Dot Sheehan, UNH Senior Associate Athletic Director of External Relations and Operation Hat Trick founder; and Moxie the dog. Photo courtesy Gil Talbot.

Operation Hat Trick (OHT), the University of New Hampshire athletics department and Northeast Passage (NEP) announced Monday the creation of the NEP Athlete Opportunity Fund, a collaborative partnership that will be funded in part by OHT to provide supplemental programmatic support for recruiting, training and coaching of student-athletes with disabilities and disabled veterans. The NEP Athlete Opportunity Fund will prove critical in administering much-needed resources to attract and develop outstanding Paralympians, including disabled veterans, for Northeast Passage.

“We are thankful to OHT for creating and funding the Athlete Opportunity Fund,” Jill Gravink, director of Northeast Passage, said. “Support from this fund will help to assure that student-athletes with disabilities and disabled veterans will receive the coaching and support they need to pursue their competitive aspirations. It also affirms the strength of the relationship between UNH athletics and Northeast Passage.”

“We take great pride in our partnership with Northeast Passage and Operation Hat Trick and are excited this alignment has produced the NEP Athlete Opportunity Fund,” Marty Scarano, UNH Director of Athletics, said. “UNH Athletics and NEP share a common determination to train and develop top-notch athletes, and the financial support from OHT’s national success affords us the all-important funding element of this corroborative effort.”

“Operation Hat Trick is happy to help fund the new Northeast Passage Athlete Opportunity Fund,” Dot Sheehan, UNH Senior Associate Athletic Director of External Relations, said. “Thanks to the generosity of many who have done fundraisers here in New Hampshire and donated the proceeds to OHT, we are excited to be able to help those disabled veterans and others who are retraining and working to get an education at UNH. NEP is the appropriate program with whom to partner, since they are aligned with the mission of Operation Hat Trick.”

While OHT is the primary source of support for the current-use fund, individual gifts can be made directly to the fund through the [University of New Hampshire Foundation, Inc.](#)



Operation Hat Trick was founded at UNH as an organization that delivered hats to wounded soldiers in VA hospitals. OHT's mission is to generate funds to support the recovery, education and future employment of wounded service members and veterans. OHT is dedicated to the memory of Nate Hardy (son of UNH professor Dr. Steve Hardy and his wife, Donna) and Mike Koch - two Navy SEALs who fought together, died together in 2008 and are buried together at Arlington National Cemetery. The name Operation Hat Trick comes from the initial focus on hats, its benefit to the military and UNH's rich tradition in hockey. Through a partnership with '47 Brand and its current 113 participating collegiate institutions, OHT has expanded beyond its New Hampshire roots

to yield greater benefits to our armed forces. Thank you for supporting our service men and women who have served their country so valiantly.



Northeast Passage was founded in 1990 as a private, non-profit organization. In March of 2000, after years of successful collaboration, NEP officially merged with the University of New Hampshire as the service branch of the Recreation Management and Policy Department within the College of Health and Human Services. Its philosophy embodies the concept of Universal Design. The mission of Northeast Passage is to create an environment where individuals with disabilities can enjoy recreation with the same freedom of choice, quality of life, and independence as their non-disabled peers. NEP accomplishes this by developing, delivering, and evaluating innovative, barrier-free recreation and health promotion programs. Its guiding principles are promoting client independence through education and problem solving, creating opportunities and collaborating with others to create a strong network of accessible recreation.

Originally published by:
UNH Athletics

Photo courtesy Gil Talbot

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