



## **CAF Community Challenge - Media and Content Kit**

### **EVENT TALKING POINTS**

- 245 challenged athletes participating across the weekend alongside 600 able body participants
- A Program Weekend with 74 challenged athletes registered for our Adaptive Sports Clinics
- 134 challenged athletes registered for Sunday's Aspen Medical Products San Diego Triathlon Challenge
- 13 number of Operation Rebound -injured military & first responder athletes
- 40 plus challenged athletes with lower limb loss participating in the Saturday's Ossur Running & Mobility Clinic presented by CAF
- 20 Paralympians from Tokyo 2020 will be joining us this weekend
- 24 Challenged Athletes are registered to do the complete swim/bike/run of the Triathlon
- 28<sup>th</sup> annual event - how CAF started
- Inaugural event in our new location at Mission Bay with headquarters at The Bahia Resort
- \$1.25M Dollars Raised going into the weekend
- Over 650 Fundraisers participating in an event on Sunday
- This event adds to the \$2.0 million dollars raised by our 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Million Dollar Challenge Ride -120 cyclists from San Francisco to San Diego riding 640 miles that will come into Mission Bay Park on Friday at 2:00pm to officially kick-off the weekend
- Hunter Woodhall and Tara Davis- popular influencers and content creators featured recently on ELLEN and recently engaged. Combined they have over 2M followers and share fun and motivational content tracking their lives as an Olympian and Paralympian
- Joe Musgrove from the San Diego Padres will be with us Sunday morning to lead out the Parade of Athletes and the Kids Run and pitch with our kiddos on the Sport Court.
- Allie Wagner- Morning show journalist from KUSI will co-Emcee the Sunday morning Parade of Athletes.
- The event has expanded significantly beyond a Triathlon to include Yoga, a 5K Walk, a Stationary Cyclethon- the EoS Fitness Tour de Cove, a family fun zone, relay teams so people can do just the swim, bike or run. A Nike FlyEase Sport Zone and a chance to meet/greet with 20 Paralympians throughout the day.

### **CAF GRANT PRESENTATIONS -SEE OUR MISSION COME TO LIFE!**

#### **1. Saturday 9:00am at the Ossur Running and Mobility Clinic presented by CAF, Bonita Cove**



#### **PRESENTED BY: ÖSSUR + CAF AMBASSADORS:**

Hunter Woodhall- Paralympian, Double Below Knee Amputee

Sarah Reinertsen- Ironman Kona Finisher, Single Above Knee Amputee

**GRANT RECIPIENT: Jonah Vilamill**

**GRANT TYPE: Össur sports prosthetic**

**PHYSICAL CHALLENGE: Single Below Knee Amputee**



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Jonah Vilamill can be described by his family in many ways. Athletic. Determined. Persistent. Strong. Faithful. Fearless. But Amputee has been the newest way they have come to describe him. When he was 4 years old, he became suddenly very ill with septic shock. He was fighting for his life after his organs began to shut down and he was only given a 10% chance of survival. Jonah received a bone marrow transplant from his younger brother that ultimately help save his life but left him with a severely damaged leg. Jonah and his family ultimately had to make the decision to amputate his leg below the knee in in 2020. Through it all, Jonah’s fighting spirit has never dwindled, and he is dead set on remaining an active kid, determined to keep up with his brothers. His looks forward to returning to his favorite sports of Jiu Jitsu and wrestling, stronger than before.

### **2. Sunday 7:30 AM during the Opening Ceremonies on the Main Stage, Bonita Cove**

**PRESENTED BY:** Donna Trauger in Memory husband [Tom Trauger](#) ,one of 5 cyclists killed in a crash



**GRANT RECIPIENT:** Emma Myers

**GRANT TYPE:** Triathlon Bike

**PHYSICAL CHALLENGE:** Single Below Knee Amputee

Emma Myers is a 15-year-old developing para-triathlete from Florida born with fibular hemimelia of her right leg. She was born in Datong, Shanxi Provence, China and was adopted at the age of 2. A couple of months later, she had her leg amputated below the knee. Since receiving her running prosthetic, there has been no stopping her. She has attended a few CAF Youth paratriathlon camps, has competed at the Para swimming National championships and has her sights set on 2024 Paralympics in Paris. She is also a leader at school and has served as student council president.

### **3. Sunday 10:05 AM- EoS Fitness Tour De Cove Stage, Bonita Cove**



**PRESENTED BY** EoS FITNESS AND GRIT FREEDOM CHAIR

**GRANT RECIPIENT:** Spencer Hopp from Carlsbad, CA

**GRANT TYPE:** Grit Freedom Chair to compete in his first Spartan Race

**PHYSICAL CHALLENGE:** Spina Bifida

29-year-old Spencer Hopp was born with Spina Bifida and has been heavily involved in wheelchair sports since the age of 5. His passion was wheelchair basketball, but he has wanted to get out of his comfort zone and challenge himself physically and mentally. He went skydiving in 2019 and has been training for his first Spartan race in November. His motto is- “Don't let a disability stop you from conquering your fears, on the other side of fear is greatness and growth, know no limits.”



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### **4. Saturday 11:00 AM Main Stage, Bonita Cove**



**PRESENTED BY: ÖSSUR**

**GRANT RECIPIENT: Cooper Mulholland**

**GRANT TYPE: Össur sports prosthetic**

**PHYSICAL CHALLENGE: Above Knee Amputee**

Cooper was active his entire life -playing baseball and football in high school in Simi Valley. He dreamt of being a firefighter and enrolled in the EMT program and while in training he was hit by a drunk driver in his car and suffered many injuries. After he healed from those, he continued working towards his dream of being a firefighter when he suffered a second accident on April 22, 2021, his motorcycle that resulted in the loss of his right leg above the knee. Cooper is not letting these setbacks lose sight of his dream. Officer Garrett Rifkin visited him in the hospital and showed him what's possible with the right support and mindset. This grant of an Össur sports prosthetic when he is ready will help him live an active lifestyle and hopefully allow him to continue pursuing his dream of becoming a firefighter.

### **5. Sunday 1:45 PM at Closing Ceremonies on the Main Stage, Bonita Cove**

**PRESENTED BY NICOLE ESSAKOW LUDWIG AND BRAD STEINLE IN HONOR OF KATE STEINLE**

**GRANT RECIPIENT: Rowan Blackwelder**

**GRANT TYPE: GRIT Junior Chair**

**PHYSICAL CHALLENGE: Freidrichs Ataxia**



Rowan is an active kiddo who loves all sports like golf, basketball, hockey, and mountain biking. He was born with that is causing a slow decrease in his strength and balance. He has received a golf scooter from CAF so he can continue enjoying his sport and not get fatigued. He will be able to explore the great outdoors with his family now with the GRIT Junior All-Terrain Wheelchair.



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### **CAF CELEBRATION OF ABILITIES ANNUAL AWARDS, Friday 5:30-7:30pm, Bonita Cove**

#### **THE JIM MACLAREN AWARD – PAULA WHALEN & THE KENNETH WHALEN FAMILY FOUNDATION**

*The highest annual honor given to the individual or individuals who have made the greatest contribution to the CAF mission in that year.*



Paula and her family foundation have donated over \$1M. Paula came to CAF after her late husband Ken did his first ever SDTC in 2014 and after he ran with Eduardo Garcia and was hooked on CAF.

Ken unexpectedly passed away that next year and Paula approached CAF to create a legacy with the Ken Whalen Surf Challenge -an inclusive community surf day in Mission Beach that helps raise funds and awareness.

Additionally, Paula gave funds needed to start

the CAF High School Adaptive Sports Program and continues to think of new ways and introduce more donors to CAF.

#### **PARTNER OF THE YEAR – TOYOTA**

*A partner who has made a significant contribution to CAF in the past year and whose values best reflect the values and mission of CAF.*



Toyota has been supporting CAF over the past 4 years with vehicles and donations. Toyota is leading the investment in the Paralympic movement and athletes competing and with over 60% of Team USA athletes supported by CAF for Tokyo 2020/2021 Games -this is the year to recognize them for supporting challenged athletes at the highest level.

CAF and Toyota share athletes like: Oksana Masters, Steve Serio, Jessica Long, Alana Nichols and continue to make a huge impact in the world.

#### **TRAILBLAZER AWARD – KYM CROSBY-HIGHTOWER, ERIK HIGHTOWER, AND JUSTIN PHONGSAVANH**



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*A challenged athlete who demonstrated courage, commitment, and leadership – not just in their personal performance but in opening doors for others.*



she is legally blind with 20/400 vision. After trying every sport with a ball, in 2007, her brother talked her into picking up Track & Field. After hard work and dedication, she is a 2-time Paralympic bronze medalist.

Erik Hightower started his racing career at the age of eight. When his parents introduced him to wheelchair sports, he absolutely hated it. After bribing him with



from the Summer Paralympic games in Tokyo, where he won a bronze medal.

These three coaches were giving back by coaching our High School Adaptive Sports Program while training for the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics.

Kym Crosby-Hightower was born with albinism, having no pigment in her hair, skin, or eyes and



money, 25 years later, Erik is currently ranked in the top 10 in the world for the 100m T54 class. He recently competed in the 2020 Tokyo Paralympic Games.

23-year-old Justin Phongsavanh was a multisport athlete in high school participating in football wrestling, track and field and rugby. In 2015, he was involved in a random act of violence at a McDonald's parking lot and was shot multiple times resulting in a spinal cord injury. Justin received a throwing chair CAF grant then a javelin, which later that year allowed him to earn his place on the national team. He recently returned home

**ASPEN MEDICAL PRODUCTS MOST INSPIRATIONAL AWARD – WILL GROULX**



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*An athlete who never ceases to inspire those around them through strength, athleticism, ability, and true dedication to the CAF mission.*



Will Groulx is a two-sport, five-time Paralympian who competes in Wheelchair Rugby and road cycling. Will served in the military until he was in a motorcycle accident that paralyzed him from the chest down. Just seven months after his accident, he discovered wheelchair rugby then handcycling and soon became unstoppable.

### **EXCEPTIONAL ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE**

#### **– LAUREN PARKER AND KENDALL GRETSCH**



*An athlete who, through perseverance and exceptional athletic conditioning, has achieved extraordinary levels of success in sport.*

Australia's Lauren Parker, once an elite able-bodied triathlete, recently brought home a silver medal from the Tokyo Paralympics in Para-Triathlon. In 2017, Lauren sustained a bike crash while training for the Ironman Australia Triathlon resulting in paraplegia. Her accident did not stop her from competing in triathlon as she quickly transitioned to paratriathlon after receiving a CAF grant for a new handcycle in 2018.

Kendall Gretsch was born with Spina Bifida but found sport early in life. Paratriathlon was where she had her first major success and she won five USA Triathlon National Championships and three ITU World Championships. In 2018, less than a year after Lauren's accident and with the support of CAF, she took a Bronze Medal at the Commonwealth Game and that next summer she won the 2019 ITU Paratriathlon World Championships with Kendall Gretsch taking second place. That set up the drama of the 2020 Paralympic Paratriathlon in Tokyo. In what turned out to be one of the most exciting events of the Paralympic Games, Kendall came from far off the pace during the finishing 5K to catch Lauren right at the line. Their final times? 1:06:25 and 1:06:26. Less than one second separated Gold and Silver. That day Kendall Gretsch became the third U.S. Paralympic Woman to earn a Gold Medal in both the summer and winter games while Lauren Parker proved to the millions of fans watching around the world that there is life after trauma.



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### **SAM DAY RISING STAR AWARD – PARKER OLENICK AND SKYLER FISHER**

*A young male and female athlete who has demonstrated commitment, dedication and focus to meet an athletic goal.*



Not only has Parker Olenick been involved with CAF's High School Adaptive Sports program over the years, but he has also been a trailblazer in the sport of Adaptive Surfing.

Parker was born 10 weeks early, and by 2 ½ he was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy. Parker's doctors gave him a long list of things he would not be able to do, but Parker took that list as a challenge and has never looked back. By 11 he was playing Sled Hockey with the San Diego Ducks and soon after he was surfing year-round in the Western Surfing Association, Adaptive Surf League, and International Adaptive Surf Series.

Skyler Fisher is a 17-year-old who enjoys swimming, triathlon and track and field. Not only does she compete in these sports, but she excels in them.

In 2021, Skyler was awarded a CAF grant for a racing chair along with being accepted as part of the CAF and USAT Junior U23 ParaTri Development Team. This year, she was able to attend the CAF Youth Para Triathlon Camp, Junior Nationals for swimming and track and field, and was honored to attend Legacy Triathlon Nationals. And this year alone, she has brought home over 25 medals from her sporting competitions



### **VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD – MIKE JENNINGS**



*An individual who devoted countless and meaningful hours as a volunteer to support challenged athletes and further the CAF mission.*

Since he has retired, Mike has donated countless hours to the CAF cycling and triathlon programs. He volunteers his time driving, working as the team bike mechanic, and supporting our athletes whenever they need it. He is an integral part of the Adaptive Cycling program and all-new E-assist program.



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### **ATHLETE HIGHLIGHTS ON WHO IS DOING THE FULL ASPEN MEDICAL PRODUCTS SAN DIEGO TRIATHLON CHALLENGE**



#### **JOHN COLLINS**

In 2017, John Collins was in a motorcycle accident and as a result lost his leg below the knee. He was introduced to CAF through a peer group, and he competed in CAF's San Diego Triathlon Challenge, despite the little experience he had with running and biking.

Through the positive energy of the adaptive community, he was able to complete the race.

Since then, John has been high-endurance training for triathlons and for CAF's Million Dollar Challenge! He is in love with his cycling journey and is a believer of healing through sport.

#### **SHARON MCKEEMAN (RIGHT)**

Sharon was partially paralyzed almost three years ago due to acute compartment syndrome. While she lost her outlet of running, her love for staying active pushed her to find adaptive sports through the Challenged Athletes Foundation community! She regularly trains for and competes in high-endurance races.

#### **JASON MALVAR**

Just one-year after losing his leg in a motorcycle accident, Jason Malvar will compete in the full San Diego Triathlon Challenge! In March 2021, he received a grant for a new running leg.

#### **DREW HUNTHAUSEN**

#### **ROCKY CAMP**

#### **JACIE KING**

#### **MICHAEL ANDRESEN**



### **TOKYO 2020 PARALYMPIANS ATTENDING**

1. Rudy Garcia-Tolson - [Rudy Garcia-Tolson Asset Kit](#)
2. Hunter Woodhall - [Hunter Woodall Asset Kit](#)





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3. Kym Crosby-Hightower - [Kym Crosby-Hightower Asset Kit](#)
4. Erik Hightower - [Erik Hightower Asset Kit](#)
5. Trenten Merrill - [Trenten Merrill Asset Kit](#)
6. Justin Phongsevanh - [Justin Phongsavanh Asset Kit](#)
7. Steve Serio - [Steve Serio Asset Kit](#)
8. Annie Flood - [Annie Flood Asset Kit](#)
9. Kendall Gretsich - [Kendall Gretsich Asset Kit](#)
10. Lauren Parker - [Lauren Parker Asset Kit](#)
11. Mohamed Lahna - [Mohamed Lahna Asset Kit](#)
12. Jamie Brown - [Jamie Brown Asset Kit](#)
13. Haven Shepherd - [Haven Shepherd Asset Kit](#)
14. David Wagner - [David Wagner Asset Kit](#)
15. Jill Walsh - [Jill Walsh Asset Kit](#)
16. Jamie Whitmore - [Jamie Whitmore Asset Kit](#)

### **CAF AMBASSADORS**

1. Willie Stewart
2. Rudy Garcia-Tolson
3. Roderick Sewell
4. Scout Bassett

### **THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS**



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