

Media Contact:

Brad Rosell
Bridge II Sports
919-907-1532
bradr@bridge2sports.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bridge II Sports Receives \$40,000 Grant from The Hartford for New Adaptive Sports Equipment and Programming

Two Local Youth Surprised With Custom-Fit Sport Wheelchairs

DURHAM, N.C. — November 2, 2020 — Bridge II Sports, a non-profit organization based in Durham, N.C., which is committed to creating opportunities for youth and adults with physical disabilities through the power of adaptive sports, was recently awarded a grant from The Hartford as part of its Ability Equipped® program.

The grant will enable Bridge II Sports, a member of the Move United Network, to purchase nine new sport chairs which will be used by their youth wheelchair basketball team, The PRIDE (Perseverance, Resilience, Integrity, Determination, and Empowerment) and expand its EveryBODYPlaysNC programming in public schools statewide.

The Hartford is also providing two Bridge II Sport youth athletes with their own custom-fit sport wheelchairs to foster their passion for wheelchair basketball. These athletes were chosen by Bridge II Sport staff because they show enthusiasm and commitment to fitness, determination to excel in wheelchair basketball and are active program participants. Bridge II Sports youth athletes, Jillian a 14-year-old girl and Bryson a 15-year-old boy, will receive their new sport wheelchairs in a surprise reveal on Saturday, November 7, 2020.

"I am so thankful to The Hartford and its Ability Equipped program. These funds make it possible for Bridge II Sports to grow our equipment inventory and better serve the community. Adaptive sports equipment is expensive and for many families, it is a financial hardship to purchase specialized equipment. I am so proud of the two youth who are receiving their own chairs. They have an aspiration to continue playing their sport in college and staying active for life. This is a celebration of opportunity and access!" stated Ashley Thomas, Founder and CEO of Bridge II Sports.

The Hartford has been an advocate for the adaptive sports movement and sponsor of athletes with disabilities for more than 25 years. As a leading provider of disability insurance, the company has a long-held belief that sports are an important part of physical rehabilitation following a disabling illness or injury. In 2019, the company created its Ability Equipped® program to make adaptive sports and equipment more accessible to youth and adults with disabilities.

On Saturday, November 7th, staff, volunteers, and Team PRIDE members will 'surprise' athletes Jillian and Bryson with a sport chair reveal celebration before skills practice at the Bridge II Sports campus. After the reveal, all athletes will try out the club's nine new sport chairs.

Meet Jillian:

Jillian is a 14-year-old high school freshman who was born with Tibia Hemimelia and a clubfoot. She has a shorter tibia in one leg leading to leg length discrepancy. Jillian began playing wheelchair basketball with Bridge II Sports in 2015. "Over the years she has grown to become the leader and captain of the team with the skills to match," commented Coach Akeem Hassell. "I can see the raw potential in her in how she handles the chair and her body movement on the court. She has made a lot of growth in a short period of time."

Jillian has been playing with Bridge II Sports for five years. She also competes with an adult team, the Triangle Thunder. She is expanding into a second sport and is on pace to join the track team at her high school and compete in a racing chair.

Jillian aspires to go on to play at the next level and already has a few eyes from collegiate teams.

Meet Bryson:

Bryson began playing wheelchair basketball this past year. He was introduced to the sport by Bridge II Sports and has demonstrated an enviable amount of talent and know-how for the game.

“Bryson just has this true athleticism and strength. His goal is to be better than me...I have to say, I think it is possible for sure,” said Coach Akeem.

Bryson was born with Spina Bifida and uses a wheelchair for mobility. Having his own sport chair will allow Bryson to practice at home and continue his athletic path that does not have an end in sight.

IMPORTANT: MEDIA COORDINATING INSTRUCTIONS

Due to COVID-19 restrictions and safety protocols, media interested in covering the event are required to:

--RSVP by 6:00 p.m. Thursday November 5th to Brad Rosell, Marketing Manager – Bridge II Sports
bradr@bridge2sports.org or 919-907-1532.

NO WALK UPS ALLOWED. BIIS will send confirmation to you.

--Limit attendance to a maximum of 2 individuals.

--Follow all COVID-19 precautions while on-site including temperature check, mask worn at all times, and maintaining social distance.

-- Review and sign [Bridge II Sports Media Policy](#) and check in for credentials on-site.

EVENT DETAILS

Date: Saturday, November 7, 2020

Time: 3:00 p.m. – media on site and prepared to record ‘surprise’ by 2:30 p.m.

Location:

Bridge II Sports
3729 Murphy School Road
Durham, NC 27705

About Bridge II Sports

Bridge II Sports is a North Carolina non-profit organization dedicated to developing and implementing opportunities for youth, adults and Veterans with physical disabilities to realize their potential through sports participation. Through sports programming, special events, awareness initiatives and team development, Bridge II Sports aims to empower persons with physical disabilities to “Find the Player Within” and challenge perceptions of disability. Ninety-five percent of our youth go on to college or tech school. It is the power of adapted sports that builds healthy bodies, minds, impacting the community with strength. Home of Valor Games Southeast, serving Veterans with disabilities, EveryBODYPlaysNC - adapted sports program in public school, and August Madness - bridging companies, pro athletes, and our athletes, breaking down the barriers of disability, one game at a time. For more information on Bridge II Sports visit www.bridge2sports.org

About The Hartford

The Hartford is a leader in property and casualty insurance, group benefits and mutual funds. With more than 200 years of expertise, The Hartford is widely recognized for its service excellence, sustainability practices, trust and integrity. More information on the company and its financial performance is available at <https://www.thehartford.com>. Follow us on Twitter at @TheHartford_PR.

The Hartford Financial Services Group, Inc., (NYSE: HIG) operates through its subsidiaries under the brand name, The Hartford, and is headquartered in Hartford, Connecticut. For additional details, please read [The Hartford’s legal notice](#).

About Move United

Move United is the national leader in community adaptive sports, empowering 100,000 youth and adults with disabilities each year to live to their fullest potential. Move United’s 200 member organizations in 43 states are united by a single mission: ensuring everyone, regardless of ability, experiences the life-changing power of sport and is fully included in their community.

Move United, an Affiliate of the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee, provides opportunities for individuals with disabilities to become physically and emotionally stronger through participation in more than 50 adaptive sports. Established in 1956, Move United offers community-based sports

recreation, education and competition that push people further, bring people closer and leave no one on the sidelines. Join our MOVEment at www.moveunitedsport.org.

