



***Greater Long Island Wheelchair Athletic Club  
The Long Island Lightning  
Junior Wheelchair Basketball Team  
P.O. Box 1141  
Sound Beach, New York 11789***

The Long Island Lightning Junior Wheelchair Basketball Team is part of the Greater Long Island Wheelchair Athletic Club, (G.L.I.W.A.C.). Our 501(c)3 not-for-profit corporation was formed to provide competitive athletic opportunities for the physically challenged. In 1997, in an effort to serve the physically challenged young boys and girls of our community, the Long Island Lightning was born. Our goal is to teach the children to perform a regimen of conditioning exercises, whose purpose is to improve general health and stamina while developing the skills necessary to excel as a team on the basketball court and as individuals in life.

The *Lightning* coaching staff is training true athletes by teaching individual basic and advanced basketball skills, physical conditioning and team play. This season our organization is expanding to include two Varsity teams (children up to age 21 or High School graduation, whichever comes first). Both teams play NCAA rules and will compete nationally. Last year our Varsity team had a banner season and qualified for the National Championship Tournament in Denver, Colorado. The *Lightning* came out of the championship tournament as the 10th ranked team in the USA. In 2005 our Varsity team won the National Championship.

While basketball would appear to be the thrust of this organization, in fact, it is not. As you know, competitive athletics teaches youngsters many things. Most notably; hard work equals success, how to work as part of a team, and how to win and lose gracefully. These are an employer's most sought after attributes. These youngsters cannot join their local "Little League" teams to obtain these attributes. They have only the *Long Island Lightning* to help them become desirable employees, who will contribute to society instead of being dependant upon it for their support.

We also strive to demonstrate to the general public that we are training true athletes. Just seeing us play, immediately causes the uninitiated to see kids in wheelchairs as potential athletes, not children who are less able than their peers. We believe that this is helping to change the public's perception of the physically challenged and that this will help to provide a level playing field in their future endeavors. The physically challenged are at a greater risk than the general population of leading a sedentary life style, which can foster future medical problems. The primary reason for this is the lack of opportunity for physically challenged youngsters to participate in FUN, exercise based activities. The *Lightning* teaches these youngsters that regular physical activity is fun. We believe that this will cause these children to lead an active life style and provide them the related health benefits for the rest of their lives. The able-bodied youngster, through a myriad of available sports teams, has the opportunity to participate in the "Little League" experience. This provides exercise, fun, competition, teamwork, skill development and good sportsmanship. All of these would be lacking to the physically challenged, if it were not for our program. We are the only competitive junior wheelchair basketball team in New York State.

We also serve as an internship site for Hofstra University's Adaptive Physical Education classes. Their students are required to attend our practices, not only to help us, but also to learn from us. Public awareness that we are training competitive athletes and not serving as a holding tank for the disabled is crucial to the acceptance of the physically challenged in our society.

A talented High School athlete is often recruited by several universities, offering the athlete a better chance at a college education. There are now eleven university based programs in the U.S.A. offering scholarship money to talented wheelchair basketball athletes. The *Lightning* currently has several athletes being actively recruited by these schools. We have five graduates of our program who have been given scholarship money to play inter-collegiate wheelchair basketball. One graduate of our program has been selected as one of the 12 best wheelchair basketball players in the country at the adult level and has recently competed with Team USA in the Paralympic Games in Beijing, China. This past Fall he signed a contract to play professionally in Europe. Our ability to compete nationally opens up tremendous opportunities for these youngsters. We compete as part of the Eastern Conference of the Junior Division of the National Wheelchair Basketball Association. In the recent past, we have traveled to Philadelphia, Baltimore, Denver, Wisconsin, Seattle, Houston and Oklahoma. The travel required to provide this competitive national schedule of games is our largest financial challenge.

The *Long Island Lightning* is the only junior wheelchair basketball team in the history of New York State. We practice at least once a week, throughout the year, and have fun doing it. We are always looking to expand our program to expose more physically challenged children to competitive sports. Our two co-ed teams are currently serving youngsters from age 6 to High School graduation. If you have a permanent physical disability that renders you unable to compete equally with your peers in "stand-up" basketball or if you know of someone who does, now is the time to act.

*The Long Island Lightning Junior Wheelchair Basketball Team* strives to involve the local physically challenged youth, both male and female, in a program designed to provide competitive athletics and foster physical fitness. By stressing both teamwork and skill development, it is our goal to develop active, competitive and employable adults. This undertaking, of course, is an expensive proposition and will require the support of the community we serve. Our goal is to build a group of Long Island area individual, family and corporate supporters to fund our growing program. Join Bethpage Federal Credit Union, BTIG Brokerage Services, Christopher Reeves Foundation, Sister Teresa Foundation, Panera's and Applebee's and become a partner in our effort to allow these youngsters to achieve their full potential. Our budget includes travel expenses, the cost of hosting our own tournament, wheelchairs, parts, etc. We depend on civic-minded individuals and corporations, such as you; to give us the opportunity to help these physically challenged children learn to live a healthy life style. Getting them involved in competitive sports will dramatically and positively affect their lives. The ball is your court!

Sincerely,

Mark Drummer  
Head Coach, Long Island Lightning Junior Wheelchair Basketball Team  
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