



## COMMUNITY-ENGAGED LEARNING

# Adaptive Gymnastics

### PATHWAY: NUTRITION AND EXERCISE

#### Facilitators

- Deborah Damon, PhD

#### The Need

- The cost of early intervention programs can be a barrier to entry for many families, providing these classes as a service eliminates the cost of an additional therapy session for our participants.
- Fostering friendships amongst young people with disabilities can improve overall well-being, help them learn important norms and values, and contribute to improved outcomes as they enter adulthood.
- Learning how to effectively communicate and develop relationships with individuals with varying levels of intellectual and speech disabilities is a vital skill for healthcare providers. This program provides an optimal opportunity for developing those communication skills.

#### Annual Student Activities

- 12 students per cohort across 2 cohorts.
- Students will be assigned 1-2 class participant(s) and work with the participant's guardians and outside therapists to define specific goals for that participant.
- Students will develop specific lesson plans for weekly classes with the participant's goals in mind.
- Students will volunteer at weekly gymnastics classes helping to guide participants through class

#### Project Description

- Students lead weekly, hour-long gymnastics classes for children with varying disabilities throughout the community.
- Classes are structured around meeting individual developmental goals for each participant.
- Students will become comfortable interacting with children with varying language and communication skills.
- Students will become advocates for children with disabilities throughout the local community and seek opportunities to promote inclusion and grow the program to include new sports and recreational activities.

#### Community Outcomes/Results

- ↑ Promotion of inclusion of individuals with disabilities in sports and recreational activities.
- ↑ Improved physical abilities and social skills for participants.
- ↑ Improved self-esteem, resiliency, and determination in our participants.

#### Community Partners

- Excalibur Gymnastics
- Eliza Hope Foundation
- Jump Start Social Skills Program
- Special Olympics Virginia
- Children's Hospital of The King's Daughters Developmental Clinic