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BLIND YOUTH TAKE ON WINTER SPORTS AT MT. HOOD AS CAMP SPARK ENTERS ITS SECOND DECADE

VANCOUVER, WASHINGTON (February 26, 2026) — The Northwest Association for Blind Athletes (NWABA) will launch its 2026 Camp Spark season February 27–March 1 at Mt. Hood Kiwanis Camp, bringing together 15 youth athletes who are blind or visually impaired for a winter weekend focused on independence, resilience, and belonging.

The three-day Youth Winter Session marks the start of Camp Spark’s second decade of impact. Throughout the weekend, campers will participate in adaptive snow sports, team activities, and esteem-building challenges designed to build self-trust in a supportive environment. For many participants, it represents their first time navigating winter recreation, learning to snowshoe with a guide, moving confidently across snow-covered terrain, and experiencing the freedom of outdoor adventure in a setting intentionally designed for them.

Camp Spark is offered entirely at no cost to participating families, ensuring that financial barriers never prevent a child from accessing life-changing outdoor experiences. Each session costs approximately \$4,500 per athlete to operate and is made possible through community support and philanthropy.

“Camp Spark is more than a weekend camp,” said Billy Henry, Founder and CEO of NWABA. “For many of our athletes, it’s the first time they try snowshoeing, and sometimes the first time they spend a night away from family. Those moments help shape how they see themselves and what they’re capable of.”

Over the past 10 years, Camp Spark has hosted 42 adaptive camp sessions across winter and summer seasons, becoming a cornerstone of NWABA’s youth programming. In its first decade alone, the program has:

- Served 648 youth athletes who are blind or visually impaired
- Achieved a 90% year-over-year camper return rate
- Seen approximately 75% of campers continue into other NWABA programs
- Provided 1:1 camper-to-staff support to prioritize safety and individualized instruction
- Invested nearly \$3 million so the camp remains entirely free for participating families

Beyond the numbers, Camp Spark’s lasting impact is evident in its alumni. Several former campers now return as mentors and staff leaders.

“When former campers come back to serve in leadership roles, that’s when we know the impact is real,” says Matt Coelho, Programs Manager of Camp Spark & Youth Services. “Our goal is simple: every child deserves the opportunity to explore, grow, and feel fully included. Camp Spark builds that foundation.”

To learn more about Camp Spark or how to participate as a camper, volunteer, or supporter, visit www.NWABA.org.

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About NWABA

The mission of Northwest Association for Blind Athletes is to provide life-changing opportunities through sports and physical activity to individuals who are blind and visually impaired. Today, NWABA is a rapidly expanding 501(c)(3) charitable organization that provides more than 5,000 program and service interactions to children, youth, adults, and military veterans with visual impairments through tailored programming which improves self-confidence and self-esteem, promotes independence, creates an inclusive community of supporters, and builds the skills necessary to succeed in all areas of life including school and employment.