



Hall of Fame

Dr. Timothy J. Nugent

University of Illinois

Inducted in 1970

In 1948 the University of Illinois at Galesburg began a highly specialized program in various competitive sports, the U. of I. Gizz Kids. The person who was the catalyst in this proactive movement in wheelchair sports was Professor Timothy J. Nugent. He is known worldwide as the founder of the National Wheelchair Basketball Association, the famous Gizz Kids wheelchair basketball team and the Ms. Kids, the first women's team. In 1986 the Kids became the Fighting Illini Men's and Women's Wheelchair Basketball teams.



Dr. Nugent's Division of Rehabilitation-Education Services moved to the Champaign-Urbana campus in 1949 and the program evolved to include a wide variety of sports ranging from archery, square dancing, fencing, bowling, football, cheerleading, swimming and table tennis, in addition to track and field. The intent was to allow students with a disability to not only achieve academically but to also have the opportunity to participate in related extracurricular experiences offered to their able-bodied classmates. Thanks to Tim's

persistence, the University of Illinois became the first major university to grant athletic letters for participation in wheelchair athletics. Any student who enrolled in the program found that Coach Nugent was strict but fair. The Gizz Kids athletes were expected to go participate in early morning calisthenics, attend a full day of classes and then return for grueling practices. In the 1960's, the "Kids" dominated the National Wheelchair Games, taking home the Team Trophy every year until the trophy was retired.

Tim, along with his athletes and staff, were very involved in the Research and Development for the technological advancements of sports-specific wheelchairs. The U of Illinois remains the prominent force in the development and training of wheelchair athletes and coaches and in applied wheelchair sports research. From the modest beginnings among the corn fields of Illinois, Dr. Tim Nugent's efforts and influence in wheelchair sports has reached around every corner of the globe.