

**Thank You, KEEN!**  
*Feedback from KEEN Athletes' Parents*

Howard and Tahma Metz

KEEN has given Adam a way to be successful at soccer and basketball, both of which he loves, and neither of which he'd have an opportunity to play otherwise. KEEN Club has given Adam an opportunity to play a team sport, something he'd never had the opportunity to do before. The support and caring of all the coaches has been wonderful; we are so grateful. Our hats are off to all of them, and especially to Elliott for having created KEEN for our kids.

Metra Petersons

Here is a little paragraph from Oscar about KEEN (as he sees it): I like KEEN because of the many nice people I meet. It is fun to exercise with and learn from my coaches. KEEN is a sunny day!!

Debbie Fickenscher

My daughter started with the Sunday sports, added swimming the following year and now also participates in KEEN Club. Two things have happened in the past three years. First she has expanded her circle of friends. She enjoys knowing so many of the athletes and being able to share so many happy experiences with this community. Second, she has become more independent. She prefers to "check in" by herself, though she loves to have me there to meet her coaches when it is time to leave. KEEN was the first activity really separate from "mom" and the experience has been a happy, positive and educational one. Thank you!

Josephine Racanelli

KEEN gives John the opportunity to interact with other people, play different sports and have fun. He seems to enjoy it very much. He looks forward to going every other Sunday.

Gary Colgrove

Michael has been participating in your activities practically from the beginning, and I can hardly believe it's been ten years. These are activities that Michael looks forward to and really enjoys, and besides providing a time of fun and exercise, his years with KEEN have unquestionably contributed to his growth and social development. He is always treated with dignity and respect, and his mother and I want to express our heart felt thanks to the many wonderful coaches who have touched so many lives.

Christina Johnson

My son has attended KEEN for about a year now. The smile on his face and seeing him skipping along into the gym or swimming pool for "KEEN time" is priceless. Even though he cannot use words to express himself, his demeanor when we arrive at KEEN says it all. He usually leaves by giving his coach a high five or his unique gesture to someone he likes – cupping their chin in his hand and shaking it from side to side. The warm reception by KEEN volunteers makes me feel like they really want to work with my child. The hour and a half he spends at KEEN on Saturdays and Sundays is my time to run errands, get some shopping



P.O. Box 341590  
Bethesda, MD 20827-1590  
P: (301) 770-3200  
info@keengreaterdc.org

done or catch up on lots of paperwork-everything from bills to IEP preparation. That's why "KEEN time" is something we both look forward to. Thanks for all your efforts!

### JoAnn

From the time my son was four years old, he hated the playground and recess. He knew he couldn't catch or throw a ball like the other kids and he couldn't understand what they wanted him to do or why they yelled at him and got angry when he didn't do it. He didn't understand all this about winning and losing, although he caught on to the idea of "losing" pretty fast: that was what he did when he played with other kids. When he started elementary school, it was worse. Now there was P.E. and adults who yelled at him on the field for not paying attention or running the wrong way. He solved this problem by just running away from P.E. frequently.

Then we tried KEEN I was a little hesitant at first. After all, Greg wasn't what I thought of as a handicapped athlete: he seemed to be able to move fine and there was certainly nothing wrong with his running! The coaches were just wonderful! Greg was thrilled to find there were people who would talk to him about what HE wanted to talk about while they played ball or ran or rode scooters. When I asked him why he liked his coaches, he said "Because they LIKE me!" in an amazed voice. The coaches at KEEN cared about him and not about those mysterious "scores" and "skills" that he never understood.

### KEEN Parent

The fact is that children with disabilities have precious few activities that fill them with joy and a sense of accomplishment. So, when something comes along that sets their hearts aglow it is to be all the more cherished. KEEN has been nothing less than a treasure for our family. A participant in the program since its inception, Josh sees KEEN as "mine." He has benefited not only from the physical activity, but also on an emotional level as measured by his increased self-esteem and self-confidence. So strong is his feeling for the program, that even when he is sick, Josh will put on his KEEN t-shirt and demand that we drive him. And, despite having a limited temporal sense, Josh always knows when Sundays arrive and whether it's KEEN or KEEN Club.

Raising a child with a severe disability is such a challenge. It's twice the work of raising a typical child with half the sleep. And sometimes finding a welcoming place and open arms for your child is the biggest challenge of all. Thank you KEEN for providing that place. A place that's fun, that's exciting and that recognizes my children's value.

*Kids Enjoy Exercise Now (KEEN Greater DC ) is a non-profit, volunteer organization that provides free one-to-one recreational opportunities for children and young adults with mental and physical disabilities. Originally founded by Washington, D.C., attorney Elliott Portnoy while studying at Oxford University, KEEN continues to flourish today in England with programs in Oxford, London and Birmingham. In 1992, Portnoy and a committee of volunteers living in the Washington, D.C., area launched KEEN in the United States, which has served more than 500 athletes with disabilities. .*