

In the heart of Morristown, New Jersey, a unique and inspiring initiative is making waves—SNAP, a program dedicated to teaching children with special needs how to play sports.

SNAP, which stands for Special Needs Athletic Program, is designed to break down barriers and create opportunities for children with special needs to engage in sports. The program recognizes the importance of physical activity in the development of every child, regardless of their abilities. Almost every Wednesday, student volunteers and joyful kids pile into a gym to play sports together. Each child is paired with a volunteer and can walk around playing whatever they want. There is basketball, soccer, and even a mat on wheels that kids can ride around on. The options are as diverse as the smiles on the kids' faces. This program provides beneficial experiences for everyone involved. Students can learn how to teach and be kinder individuals, while children with special needs are given a platform to enjoy sports and make friends.

The impact of SNAP on its participants is profound. Children who may have felt excluded from traditional sports programs find a supportive community where they can thrive. The main goal of SNAP is to ultimately raise awareness about the impact students can make in the lives of children with autism and other disabilities.

The SNAP program is not just about teaching kids how to play sports, but creating a sense of community. Through adaptive sports and a commitment to individualized attention, SNAP is making a positive impact on the lives of children with special needs, proving that every child deserves the chance to play and thrive.

Now, SNAP even runs clinics where they educate young children on the conditions that specially abled people face. The lessons incorporate hands-on activities and simulations that allow children to step into the shoes of someone with a disability. Through adaptive sports equipment and uniquely designed activities, learners gain firsthand experience of the challenges faced by their peers with neurodiverse conditions. This hands-on approach is instrumental in breaking down stereotypes and promoting a culture of empathy.

Beyond the physical activities, volunteering for SNAP has taught me valuable lessons in empathy and kindness. Working closely with these remarkable kids has expanded my understanding of diverse abilities and reinforced the importance of creating an inclusive environment. The program not only benefits the children with special needs but also provides an opportunity for student volunteers like me to learn how to be more compassionate individuals. Seeing the positive impact on the children's

self-esteem and social skills has been incredibly rewarding, and it has inspired me to continue contributing to this meaningful cause. Volunteering for SNAP has become more than just a weekly commitment; it's a journey of personal growth, community building, and making a difference in the lives of these amazing children.

I first walked into SNAP as your cliché freshmen who was more concerned with sports, grades, and video games than volunteering. Now as a rising Senior, I believe that meeting in that elementary school gym on Wednesdays has helped me and others achieve a level of maturity and emotional intelligence that I'm sure everyone would credit to SNAP.