

# LOCAL CHAMPIONS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

## The power of sport

### Being active has always been a way of life for Raeleen Baggs & her family

- For many young Canadians, playing sports growing up is almost as common as going to school. And if you weren't on a sports team of some kind, you were likely signed up for dance lessons, gymnastics or even swim classes. Whatever it was, many of us have been positively influenced by a standout coach or instructor somewhere along the way.

For children in the northeast region of Newfoundland and Labrador, that leader is Raeleen Baggs of Paradise, NL. A 44-year-old sports enthusiast, who in her free time is a committed soccer and wheelchair basketball coach who has been heavily engaged in sport since she was a little girl.

"Physical activity has always been an important and huge part of my life. My dad was a multi-sport athlete when I was growing up," Raeleen told ParticipACTION. "So, he just got me involved, and there was always a ball or stick or skis involved when I was young, so I too became a multi-sport athlete. I even played in the Canada Games in two different sports, soccer and squash."



Photo credit: Raeleen Baggs

Recently, Raeleen was involved as a coach at the 2019 Canada Winter Games in Red Deer and it was quite obvious that her passion for sport hasn't stopped at herself. Raeleen's made physical activity a major part of her entire family's everyday lives, including her two children, "My daughter (Taylor, age 14), plays soccer and basketball, and my son (Gavin, age 11), plays sledge hockey, wheelchair basketball and swims." said Raeleen.

"Gavin has a physical disability; sacral agenesis, which affects the bottom part of his spine He's very able-bodied, he can walk and run and he's playing on a wheelchair basketball team."

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Gavin was the youngest athlete competing in the wheelchair basketball competition at the Canada Games this year. Building on his mom's spirit on the powerful impact sport and physical activity can have on Canadians' lives, Gavin himself is already leading by example.

As for Raeleen, she sees the positive impacts physical activity can have firsthand in her day-to-day life as a physiotherapist:

**“Being active makes you feel better, happier and it’s even great for your mental health, which is so important. Outside of the physical benefits, mental health is so important and prevalent these days.”**

But just don't take Raeleen's word for it, get out there and get moving to enjoy those benefits yourself. Engaging in sports is a fun and effective way to reap all the benefits that physical activity has to offer, including boosted energy levels, increased happiness and in Raeleen's case, the ability to Coach Better.

“Coaching has become very important to me, and not just coaching my own children,” Raeleen said. “I've coached other people's children for many years and I just wanted to give back and pass along what I've learned and share my experiences with the younger generation.”