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Blind Athletes Train At United States Olympic Training Center

As you cheer on your favorite athlete in Vancouver, some blind and visually impaired athletes got a chance to learn the ropes of their favorite sports in Southern Colorado.

Teens from Los Angeles, California visited the U. S. Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs this weekend, and they were doing more than just building muscle.

"I am an athlete at my school. So, I will be lettering in Water Polo," says 16-year-old Bryanna Stubbert, a visually-impaired athlete. "I've participated in wrestling the last four years at my high school," says 17-year-old Anthony Melena, who competes without his sense of sight. Bryanna and Anthony enjoy participating in sports, despite having a disability.

They are part of the Los Angeles-based non-profit, Junior Blind of America. "There's more of a challenge for a youngster who is blind or visually impaired," says Mark Lucas, Executive Director for The United States Association of Blind Athletes.

Learning from coaches, Paralympic and Olympic athletes is inspirational for these young competitors. "Looking around and seeing the athletes, they amaze me because of all the time and dedication," says Stubbert. "Ever since I got here...I have been dreaming of coming out here to train," says Melena.

By coming to this sports education camp at the USOTC, The United States Association of Blind Athletes is helping the teenagers break down barriers. "It teaches them independence, it teaches them self-confidence and how to integrate successfully in their community," says Lucas.

The students who participated in the camp were able to go thanks to fundraising and efforts from the USABA and Junior Blind of America.

About the U.S. Association of Blind Athletes: A member organization of the U.S. Olympic Committee, is a non-profit organization that provides training for blind and visually impaired athletes for competition in nine sports. USABA members range from blind children developing sports skills to elite athletes who train for competitions such as the Paralympic Games, the world's second largest athletic competition that draws more than 4,000 disabled athletes. For more information visit www.usaba.org.

About the Junior Blind: Since 1953, Junior Blind has been an innovative leader in helping people of all ages who are blind, visually impaired or multi-disabled achieve independence. Each year, Junior Blind provides services to thousands of individuals and their families through programs that offer individualized methods of early-intervention therapy, education, rehabilitation and recreation. These life-changing programs are designed to empower infants, children, teens and adults to reach their highest level of independence and self-esteem. To learn more, please visit www.juniorblind.org.