

# LTHS physical education classes provide dual lesson for students

## Staff report

Lockport Township High School District 205 physical education teacher Don McKillip not only is helping his students to stay physically fit this school year, he is also teaching them a lesson in life.

McKillip and Stacy Sparlin, another physical education teacher at LTHS, share three students with disabilities who are confined to wheelchairs. Because these students had some difficulty competing in some of the physical education activities, McKillip decided to expand his curriculum to incorporate wheelchairs into some of them.

McKillip asked the faculty and staff at LTHS to donate wheelchairs to the Physical Education Department and was contacted by LTHS mathematics teacher Robert Hughes, whose father, Roger T. Hughes, is the chairman of the Operations Committee at the United Cerebral Palsy Association of Greater Chicago.

Hughes, in cooperation with the United Cerebral Palsy Association, was able to donate 10 wheelchairs to McKillip and his students. As a result, LTHS students have the opportunity to compete in physical education programs while maneuvering in wheelchairs.

McKillip has begun with a basketball program, but expects to expand the wheelchair use to other activities, as well, such as volleyball and others.

"The benefits of this program are that students who may never have sat in a wheelchair can now empathize with those who have only known life in a wheelchair," McKillip said. "The students who do use wheelchairs and have often



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Fifi Gazawneh and Paige Ditchman fight for possession of the ball during a wheelchair basketball game at LTHS recently. The gym classes got a donation of 10 wheelchairs from the United Cerebral Palsy Association of Greater Chicago, so they can include students with disabilities in class activities.

felt excluded and isolated in these activities can now feel like they are one of the team. This has been an exceptionally rewarding experience for me."

Sparlin has also enjoyed the new program.

"To see the students' faces light up—that's what is really exciting about this program. These students now are getting a new perspective on life, and I find that to be the neatest part of it," she said.

The students enjoy the games and are more than happy to do something that is cutting-edge in physical education.

"I find it difficult to maneuver the chair," said Paige Ditchman, a student in Sparlin's class. "But I am so happy to have experienced something new and to be able to see the challenges of the disabled."