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Team SurfGimp looking to help disabled athletes get back in their games

Sean Greene

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Jay Liesener surfing

SurfGimp Foundation

Jay Liesener was a multi-sport athlete with a special love for surfing, that didn't end despite a potentially tragic accident, and that love lives on despite his death.

Jack Frederick is on the board of the SurfGimp Foundation, that will be holding its second annual Winter Beach Bash in Dewey Beach on Saturday, January 18 to help provide athletes with disabilities with financial assistance to pursue their activities or dreams.

“How it got started was a buddy of ours Jay Liesener. Jay was a quadriplegic, who got back into surfing years ago after breaking his neck when he was 17. He got back into surfing with the help of family and friends who grew together. He started to surf a lot more and it evolved into what he called Team SurfGimp.”

SurfGimp might seem like an odd term, but Frederick said he meant a ton to Jay.

“He used that term to say he was having a little fun while making a political statement at the same time. The idea was to take a derogatory term about a disability and use it to challenge people’s assumptions. He passed in 2017, but before he passed, we were able to get the foundation established and Jay’s dream was to help other people with disabilities pursue whatever it was they wanted to do.”

Those pursuits have spread in many ways beyond the surf.

“An all-terrain chair, we helped some people to travel to compete in competitions, we gave grants for surfing lessons. It’s expensive to travel and compete for those in adaptive competitions, so we were glad to give them some funding to help for that.”

Team SurfGimp is quickly growing. Last year they awarded \$35,000 in grant money to eight recipients, and Frederick said the organization received three times as many applications for 2020.

“It’s unbelievable, to be honest. It makes me proud that we’re able to honor Jay and keep his legacy going by helping those with disabilities pursue what they want to pursue. When you’re in those situations, things get expensive. Equipment is very expensive, travel is very expensive, and many times people have to travel with other people, you have to rent special vans if it’s a physical disability. Jay was very inspiring, and touched everybody that he met. Everybody loved hanging out with Jay, he was infectious. Seeing the foundation growing the way its growing, it just symbolizes how Jay was.”

They’ll get a chance to celebrate Jay’s legacy and raise money on Saturday, January 18 during an \$80 event in one of Jay’s favorite places: Dewey Beach.

“At the Rusty Rudder. It is a four-hour premium open bar, catered with drinks and dinner are included with the price of admission. You can’t beat it for the type of event it is for how much you’re spending and the cause it’s going to. There’ll be live music

from Bryen O'Boyle formerly of Mr. Greengenes along with another band Just the Tip, there will also be a large silent auction.”

You can find more information about [Team SurfGimp and the Winter Beach](#) here.

Sean Greene

WDEL/Delaware SportsZone Sports Director. National Sports Media Association's Delaware Sportscaster of the Year (2013).

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