



American Association of Adapted Sports Programs (AAASP) Welcomes Two New Board of Directors in 2022

State Senator Kim Jackson and Former NFL Player Gary Burley Join AAASP Board

Atlanta, January 12, 2022 – The American Association of Adapted Sports Programs, Inc. is honored to welcome State Senator Kim Jackson and former NFL player and Pro Start Academy CEO Gary Burley to our distinguished [AAASP Board of Directors](#). Jackson and Burley's nominations were confirmed at the AAASP Board of Directors Meeting at the end of December 2021. Both Jackson and Burley bring a wealth of experience with extensive knowledge to the organization, and we are pleased to have them as new additions to our AAASP Board of Directors.

New AAASP Board Member – Senator Kim Jackson

Senator Kim Jackson is an Episcopal priest from the rural South and made Georgia her home more than 10 years ago. She was raised in a hardworking family, where love of God, family, and country were prioritized. Her Dad served families as a social worker for more than 30 years. For many years, he worked for Child Protective Services. From her Dad, Kim learned the importance of advocating for the vulnerable and neglected. Kim's Mom, a retired nurse and Professor of Nursing, served as a community nurse for economically disadvantaged families living with sickle cell disease. From her mom, Kim learned the importance of expanding access to quality early childhood education and health care.

After graduating from Furman University, Kim volunteered as an EMT and led her colleagues at Emory's Candler School of Theology in advocating for Criminal Justice Reform in Georgia. Upon receiving her Master of Divinity, Kim commenced her vocation as an Episcopal priest. During ten years of ministry, she served as a college chaplain, a nationally renowned consultant and preacher, a parish priest, and a social justice advocate.

In 2018, the Georgia House of Representatives commended Kim for her "tireless efforts on behalf of the disenfranchised, disenchanting, and dispossessed" ([GA House Resolution 1188](#)). Now serving as State Senator for District 41 and the Vicar at the Episcopal Church of the Common Ground, Kim co-creates Church with people who are unhoused in downtown Atlanta.

New AAASP Board Member – Gary Burley

During the 1970s and early 1980s, Gary Burley was a hulking defensive lineman known for creating havoc for quarterbacks as a star player at the University of Pittsburgh and in the National Football League (NFL). Today, Burley leads an organization in Birmingham called Pro Start Academy that helps mentor young athletes and provides tips on how they can achieve success on and off the football field. The father of four children and grandfather of 12 grandchildren, Burley is passionate about helping young people achieve their dreams of making it in the pros. He has fought off life-threatening ailments including cancer, a bone marrow transplant, a bout of salmonella poisoning that put him in a wheelchair for six months and a kidney transplant. Burley delights in aiding young people in their journey to the NFL. He hopes to give the next generation assistance and guidance.

Burley grew up and attended high school in a suburb of Columbus, Ohio, but it was at the University of Pittsburgh where he fine-tuned his craft, becoming a star All-American defensive end. He was drafted and played in the NFL for 10 years with the Cincinnati Bengals (he was on the team's 1982 squad that lost a 26-21 Super Bowl to the San Francisco 49ers) and Atlanta Falcons.



Nine years ago, Burley founded Pro Start Academy “to give student-athletes a competitive advantage by building a bridge to success on and off the field of play.” Burley relocated Pro Start Academy to Birmingham. A few years ago, he developed cancer and survived months of grueling chemo. His health improved until early 2014 when he had salmonella poisoning in his knee.

While in the hospital, Burley got an infection, but he continued to fight because of the dream that he had to help kids through Pro Start Academy. “My dream was to develop citizen athletes, not all stars. I wanted to give kids an opportunity to be successful not just on the field, but off the field,” said Burley. Pro Start Academy is open to boys aged 12 to 18. For youth who can’t afford the program, Burley provides scholarships.

The American Association of Adapted Sports Programs (AAASP), headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia, is a not-for-profit association dedicated to developing interscholastic adapted sports programs in partnership with national, state, and local educational agencies. It represents a standardized approach to extracurricular adapted team sports and has developed one of the nation's most comprehensive school-based athletic programs for students with physical disabilities attending grades 1-12. For more information, please visit our website at <http://adaptedsports.org> or join our conversations on Twitter at: @AdaptedSports.

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Contacts:

Atlanta: Terri Grunduski, Grunduski Group – terri@grunduskigroup.com 404-226-7497
Donna Feazell, Grunduski Group – donna@grunduskigroup.com 404-290-1929