



## 11<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL BOATING & BEACH BASH FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES WELCOMES TWO NATIONAL SINGING ACTS – X-FACTOR'S RION PAIGE AND AGT'S KECHI OKWUCHI

*Nation's largest, FREE, one-day event for people with disabilities--both seen and unseen-- returns to Boca Raton on March 10; welcomes back more than 5,000 guests*

BOCA RATON, Fla. – January 16, 2019 – The 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Boating & Beach Bash for People with Disabilities – the nation's largest, free, one-day event for people with disabilities, both seen and unseen – will again welcome national entertainment to its stages for its audience of more than 5,000. Presented by the American Disabilities Foundation, the event has become an inclusive Spring Break event, drawing families from across the country.

New for 2019, **Rion Paige**, an 18-year-old finalist on the X Factor, will perform as one of the Bash's two headliners. A Jacksonville, FL native, who now lives in Nashville, TN, Paige was born with a rare condition called arthrogryposis multiplex congenita, which caused permanent damage to her arms, resulting in her hands being in a fixed, bent position. A country-and-western musician with a huge singing voice, Rion finished in fifth place on Season 3 of the X Factor, where she was mentored by Demi Lovato.

Returning for 2019 will be singer **Kechi Okwuchi**, a Nigerian-American singer and motivational speaker. She was one of the two survivors in the Sosoliso Airlines Flight 1145 crash on Dec. 10, 2005, and suffered severe third-degree burns all over her body. To date, she has endured more than 100 surgeries. A finalist on the 12<sup>th</sup> season of America's Got Talent in 2017, Okwuchi headlined the Boating & Beach Bash in 2018 and was a tremendous crowd-pleaser. She can currently be seen as a finalist on AGT's World Championships.

“We couldn't be happier to have two young stars who demonstrate through their amazing talent that people with disabilities have so much to contribute to our enjoyment,” said Executive Director Jay Van Vechten. “Each year, the Bash grows in so many ways – with our entertainment, support, visitors, features and sheer fun factor. We are bringing back the elements people love and adding to it with the star power of Ms. Paige and Ms. Okwuchi.”

Also appearing on stage this year will be the visually impaired Lighthouse for the Blind Gospel Choir of Miami and noted soloist Natalia Sulca, also from Miami, who has been blind since birth. Additionally, for the first time ever, the Bash will feature an afternoon Open Mic opportunity for others in South Florida who have a disability and who would like to appear on the Bash stage. Those interested should write [info@boatingbeachbash.com](mailto:info@boatingbeachbash.com) to request a time slot and share their background information.

The 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Boating & Beach Bash for People with Disabilities will be held from 10 a.m.-3 p.m., Sunday, March 10, 2019, at Spanish River Park, 3001 North Ocean Blvd. (A1A), Boca Raton, FL 33431.

Organizers are currently accepting applications for volunteers at [www.BoatingBeachBash.com](http://www.BoatingBeachBash.com). Those interested in being an exhibitor or sponsor, should write to [jay@boatingbeachbash.com](mailto:jay@boatingbeachbash.com)

Designed as a Spring Break vacation for all people with disabilities, their family members and supportive caregivers, the Bash has welcomed guests from as far away as California and Rome, Italy. It is the only event of its kind, offering complimentary, scheduled boat rides, special access to the beach and ocean with Mobi Mats, a Kids Fun Zone, therapy workshops led by trained specialists, wheelchair yoga, music, costumed dance parties, therapy ponies and dogs, a BBQ lunch, and more. Everything is free and geared toward the guests' special needs.

The 2019 Bash will be dedicated to the memory of Rexford "Rex" Sydney Blazer III, a beloved member of the Royal DJs of Delray Beach, who passed away at 22 years old on Dec. 16, 2018. Rex performed as DJ "Mr. World Wide" at the Bash for years. Born with cerebral palsy, Rex was confined to a wheelchair, but inspired many with his joyful personality and love of music, which garnered him celebrity and neighborhood fans alike.

#### ABOUT THE BOATING & BEACH BASH FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES:

The Bash was started in 2009 as an event hosted by the City of Boca Raton Advisory Board for People with Disabilities. The City relinquished the Bash in 2011 to the management of Executive Director Jay Van Vechten and his wife, Lowell. Since then, through community support and donations, the couple and the Bash's planning committee have pushed the event's growth beyond wildest expectations. Welcoming more than 5,000 guests in 2018, the Bash has become the largest, free, wholly disability-friendly event in the country with a full schedule of entertainment, recreation, boat rides, beach access, vendors, exhibitions, workshops and food in the nation. It has also become a Spring Break destination event in South Florida, drawing families from as far away as California and New York. Learn more at [www.boatingbeachbash.com](http://www.boatingbeachbash.com)

#### IF YOU GO:

11<sup>th</sup> Annual Boating & Beach Bash for People with Disabilities

10 a.m.-3 p.m.

March 10, 2019

Spanish River Park, 3001 North Ocean Blvd. (A1A), Boca Raton, FL 33431

[www.BoatingBeachBash.com](http://www.BoatingBeachBash.com); 561-715-2622

National singing acts, Rion Paige and Kechi Okwuchi – both performers with physical disabilities – will headline the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Boating & Beach Bash for People with Disabilities. The Bash, which is free, is the nation's largest festival for people with special needs – both seen and unseen – their family members and caregivers. Festivities include boat rides, beach access, sporting events, ponies for petting, costumed action heroes, wheelchair yoga, a Kids Fun Zone, food, music and dance parties. This year, the Bash is dedicated to Rexford Sydney Blazer III, a beloved member of the Royal DJs of Delray Beach, who passed away at 22 years old, on Dec. 16, 2018.