

Aleutia Peters

How NYO has impacted my life

I joined Native Youth Olympics (NYO) for the first time my sophomore year and I instantly fell in love. One thing I love about it is that there is an event for everyone. Whether you're really strong, light, fast, or have an amazing vertical, no one is left out. When I first joined, I didn't think I would succeed, but with my teammates always there to support me, I was able to get better each day. Through a lot of hard work, sore hamstrings, and ice packs, I was lucky enough to persevere and travel to the state competition in Anchorage. It was an incredible experience where I learned how to operate under pressure, and have fun while doing it. Although I didn't place, it is one of my favorite memories, and I met people who I still keep in touch with today. NYO is my all-time favorite sport to participate in because of the connection with my peers. It's less like a team and more like a family. Through NYO, I became close with people who I had barely even talked to beforehand, this sport connects people in a way that I can't explain. It makes strangers into best friends, and coaches into mentors. Along with giving me valuable connections, it also gave me the patience to learn something completely new, and the determination to keep at it even when times are tough. Even though there is no traveling this year, I am so happy that I was able to participate in virtual NYO this year as well as in 2020. It not only gives me something to look forward to, but it also gives me a place where I can relieve my stress in a healthy, fun way. While I do my event (one-foot high kick), that is the only thing I focus on. I don't think about paying for college next year, my town shutting down, or the stress of school or the pandemic. When I'm in NYO, it's just me and the ball, and that is when I am at my happiest. This has given me a place where I can truly express myself, and I will take that with me throughout life. NYO has made me into a better person, has taught me valuable skills, and given me friendships that I will take with me through life, and I am grateful for that every day. NYO isn't just a sport, it's a lifestyle.