

Triumph

November 2005



Special Olympics
New York

Rainy Weather Doesn't Dampen Spirits at Fall Games

Binghamton Community Reaches out to Support SONY

Despite months of planning for the Special Olympics New York 2005 Fall Games in Binghamton, two straight days of heavy rain washed out a number of outdoor venues and with less than 20 hours before the competitions everything was changed. "The forecast was calling for 2-4 inches of rain and a number of venues were waterlogged," said Chris Porreca, Director of Development. "Our first concern is always the safety of our

athletes and we did not want to put them in jeopardy."

Shortly after noon on Friday the call was made to bring as many events inside as possible. The Binghamton



Special Olympics
New York

FALL GAMES



University Events Center was already hosting Open-

ing and Closing Ceremonies and BU Staff was

more than willing to help out SONY. "The first thing we did was to talk with Eric Backlund and Sue Crane at the Events Center and explain our situation," said Vice President of Competition, Peter Lawrence. "We were already behind the eight ball and we were looking for any help they could give us, they went above and beyond our expectations."

The Events Center Staff started making phone calls to contacts in the community and within no time event after event was being moved inside. Even though Binghamton University had a full schedule that weekend, it was also Parent's Weekend, the Events Center

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Milo's Migration Ends with a 25,000 Rubber Duck Reunion

2005 Million Dollar Duck Race a quacky good time

Milo was thrilled to be reunited with his 25,000 friends at the 2005 Million Dollar Duck Race on Friday, September 23. Even though his Manhattan Migration included many exciting stops, his favorite stop was the last - the race itself. The little ducks began their swim just after 6:00 p.m., making their way down the East River to South Street Seaport. A good-sized crowd turned out to watch the race from Pier 17, all with the hope that their duck would be a lucky duck and make them a millionaire! However, while there was no million dollar winner this year, thanks to our sponsors a lucky few went home with prizes like American Airlines tickets, electronics and one year subscriptions to the New York Lottery.

In addition to our feathered friends, there were many attendees at this year's race. Volkswagen kicked off their 'Force of

Good' tour with a stop at the Duck Race - dropping Milo off in their updated New Beetle, handing out 'Force of Good' fun stuff and entertaining participants with a yo-yo team. Other guests included: Yolanda Vega and Kevin Logie from the New York Lottery as co-MC's; and Global Messenger and Special Olympics athlete Mary Pannese from Staten Island, who gave a lovely speech about her involvement with Special Olympics. Everyone had a great time at the VID (Very Important Duck) party.

We would like to thank our sponsors: presenting sponsor New York Lottery, New York State United Teachers, Merrill Lynch,

Time Warner Cable, Daily News, WABC-TV, South Street Seaport, New York Sports Clubs, Knights of Pythias and Amtrak. The official airline of Special Olympics New York is American Airlines. We'd also like to thank everyone who adopted ducks - your support made

this year's Duck Race a success! A list of winners can be found at <http://2005duckrace.kintera.org> or by calling the Duck Hotline at (212) 490-1062. ■



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A Message from the President

Neal J. Johnson, President & CEO of Special Olympics New York, Inc.



Everyone involved in Special Olympics values the lessons we learn each and every day from our athletes. We also know that these lessons are not limited to sports or any coaching methodology or theory, but usually there are much deeper lessons about how we can and maybe should, approach life. Our athletes never cease reminding us of their honesty, humor, sharing, zest for life, and effort to maximize their potential. Many coaches and athletic administrators often use Special Olympics athletes as examples for the very talented athletes they are responsible for.

This past weekend, our rain soaked SONY Fall Games, provided yet another lesson in how our athletes are illuminating the path for all of us. As the SONY staff and the volunteers of the Local Organizing Committee began to address the need for dramatically altering the plans for these games and the potential for canceling some components of the weekend, we began to communicate to the programs that the weather would have a very deleterious effect on the weekend. Yet all day Friday delegations arrived and began to prepare for whatever games would be provided for them.

While there was no doubt about the weather being miserable for Friday evening, you could not tell if there was a cloud in the sky from the enthusiasm of the athletes at Opening Ceremonies. All through the competition, modified or otherwise, these athletes competed hard, showing their championship mettle, skills and enthusiasm. There was just no way they were not going to do their best and have a good time while doing it. When it came to the Closing Ceremonies and the Victory Dance, you would never have known that it rained for the entire games!

I'd like to thank my coworkers on the SONY staff and the members of the Local Organizing Committee for all their hard work around the clock to make these games happen. A particularly big thank you to Binghamton University for their response to our call for assistance by opening up whatever doors we needed to alter our plans for this event, and to our new found friends in the Binghamton, Vestal and Johnson City communities, who had not planned on being part of our games but answered our call as well. My most heartfelt thank you is reserved for the athletes of these games, the image of whom I will forever call to mind when I think "someone is raining on my parade."



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Inspire Greatness

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LPGA Golfer and Special Olympics New York Tee Up

3rd annual tournament a success at the Fairways of Halfmoon

On September 23 Michele Redman, LPGA golfer, and DJ Nolan, Special Olympics New York golfer, spent the day together at the Tee It Up Golf Tournament hosted by Pacific Pools. Redman helped to raise nearly \$800 on one of the holes with a 'beat the pro' competition. Her donations helped to contribute to the over \$20,000 that was raised at the 3rd annual tournament in Halfmoon, NY. "Redman (who is sponsored by Pacific Pools) added so much to the tournament at the Fairways of Halfmoon. Her presence and professional tips encour-

aged our athletes to keep up their hard work in the sport while still remembering to always have fun," said Rebecca M. Santoli, Senior Director of Development for Special Olympics New York.

Also in attendance at the outing were Rich Becker of Fox23 News and Stephen Caruso of Special Olympics New York. Caruso, an Albany-based athlete for Special Olympics, spoke at the dinner for the 120 people in attendance. He shared with the guests his love of Special Olympics, how it has impacted his life and his

swimming efforts.

"We are looking forward to next year,

where our goal is to double our fundraising efforts and attendees," said Rebecca M Santoli. "We certainly expect a large increase due to Michele's attendance this year!" ■



SONY Charity of Choice at PIA Golf Tournament

On Monday, September 26, golfers at the Independent Insurance Agents of the Capital District teed off to support Special Olympics New York (SONY). The event, at the Pinehaven Country Club in Guilderland, NY, raised \$3,200 to support our programs and athletes. Ever year the president selects a charity for their annual golf

tournament, and this year President John Zongrone, of Zongrone Insurance Agency, selected SONY because of his past relationship with our organization.

Also, making a double-header appearance at two golf tournaments in one long weekend, SONY athlete DJ Nolan spent the day golfing with the players and gave

a moving speech at the awards dinner that evening. Thank you to the Independent Insurance Agents for your support, and to DJ Nolan for his athleticism and tireless efforts in promoting the benefits of Special Olympics. ■

Long Island Athlete Presents Mounting Block for Local Equestrian Club

On Saturday, September 17, 2005, Long Island athlete Daniel Fletcher presented a six-foot mounting block to a local Special Olympics equestrian training club at Saddle Rock Ranch in Middle Island.

Daniel's construction of the mounting

block began a year ago when he first approached the Long Island Region about being a Boy Scout Eagle candidate and the requirements to do a project for charity. As a Special Olympics equestrian athlete, Daniel "did this project so that athletes like himself can safely mount the horse and enjoy riding horses in the Special Olympics equestrian program."

In the words of Daniel's mother and Special Olympics Coach, Edna, "Courage, motivation and determination are only a few of the words that describe Daniel's character." Despite the many challenges he has faced in his life, he has continued to live life as he inspires those around him.



The dedication of this well-built mounting block is one of the many ways Daniel Fletcher inspires others. He is also a multi-sport athlete who trains and competes in equestrian, softball, track and field and bowling. Daniel is a true leader who continues to make a difference everyday. ■



centerfold

centerfold

TORCH RUN TIMES

Law Enforcement Torch Run News

NYSP Beats Tough Competition Hudson Valley Fire Truck Pull

Event grows in second year

The Hudson Valley Fire Truck Pull was a smashing success on October 1, as State Corrections Officers, Troopers and Sheriff's Deputies competed to pull a 45,000-pound engine for a distance of 20 feet in the fastest time. The New York State Police emerged in first place with a time of 5.47; Greenhaven Correctional Facility came in second with a time of 5.85; and the Dutchess County Sheriff's

Corrections Team came in third with a time of 5.96. The Dutchess County Sheriff's Corrections Team was last year's first place winner.

Each team consisted of 10 members and three alternates, with each member pulling 45,000 pounds. All of the teams competing raised money for the programs and athletes of Special Olympics New York. There was also a barbecue and fireworks for spectators that came to watch and cheer on the teams. ■



Highway Renamed in Honor of Art Benson, Father of LETR State Committee Member Mike Benson

On Saturday, October 1, Senator Dale M. Volker, along with members of the Western New York Legislative Delegation, announced that Route 219 will be renamed the "Erie County Veterans Memorial Highway" and the "Art Benson Memorial Highway." Art Benson is the late father of LETR state committee member Mike Benson.

In the announcement of the highway renaming, Senator William Stachowski said, "Arthur Benson was a tremendous force in advocating the U.S. Route 219 corridor as a way to improve economic development for the entire western New York region. His vision became a reality and allowed our economy to diversify and expand. We must also never forget that many of our residents are serving their country honorably throughout the world. They are at the forefront in saving lives, stabilizing regional conflicts, and protecting us from those who wish to destroy our way of life. It is my sincere hope that when motorists drive on these sections of highway, that they remember and honor both the men and women in uniform, and appreciate Arthur Benson's unwavering commitment to our region."

Mike Benson has been a long-time and active participant in New York State LETR activities, and is proud of the highway renaming in memory of his father. ■



Sometimes...

A Salute to NYSCOPBA

Written by: Jeanne Grebert

Sometimes, we all find ourselves sitting back in a chair and reflecting upon things that work or don't work in our personal and professional lives. Sometimes, I close my eyes and I think about the opportunities or challenges and those outcomes that have truly made a difference in each of our successes.

Case in point, the relationship between the Law Enforcement Torch Run and NYSCOPBA (New York State Correction Officers and Police Benevolent Association). Here are two organizations that seem to be the least likely of partners yet work together like a well oiled machine. When times are tough, the tough get going and the perfect example is NYSCOPBA. This fall as the LETR struggled with some critical issues; it was NYSCOPBA who brought to us the answers and the support that we needed to accomplish some very important tasks, critical to the success of the program as we approach 2006 and the hosting of the 25th Anniversary Law Enforcement International Torch Run Conference in Buffalo. Who among us has not had to lay it all on the line and reach out for help at some point or another?

And that is the point of my comments. Time and time again, year after year, when the LETR has had what seemed like insurmountable obstacles, its NYSCOPBA

who has come through for us when we least expect it. They understand and more importantly believe in our mission. This is not to say that many agencies and organizations aren't critical to our success but sometimes you just have to stand up and shout out to the world that someone has gone above and beyond the call of duty. In this partnership both the LETR and NYSCOPBA have faced challenging times. Even as NYSCOPBA made their way through their own obstacles, NYSCOPBA's support for the Torch Run program was unwavering. Its because of the union as a whole, it's because of people like Denny Fitzpatrick who is the ultimate in advocacy for our organization and will carry our mission to anyone who will listen and its because of a membership who has taken our cause to heart in every way they can.

Sometimes, when it's staring us right in the face – we almost go right past it. Not this time though, if I could climb up on a mountain top and shout to the world – “look at NYSCOPBA – they make a difference today and everyday.” We here at Special Olympics New York salute the partnership with NYSCOPBA. Actually, partnership is not strong enough a word for the relationship – it's more like we are soul mates. To all our friends at NYSCOPBA, words simply can't express our gratitude, but just know that sometimes, someone is sitting back in a chair knowing that without you, we'd never be the same. ■

SONY ANNOUNCES NEW HOLIDAY CARDS

*Designed by athletes and
portion of proceeds to
support New York program.*

Special Olympics has new holiday cards! Designed by Special Olympics athletes, and available at www.vistaprint.com/sony, Special Olympics holiday cards are the perfect way to



express holiday cheer while donating money to benefit Special Olympics New York (SONY). Prices start at just \$12.99 for 10 athlete designed cards.

“Special Olympics has joined with VistaPrint to offer high-quality, low-cost holiday cards designed by Special Olympic athletes,” said Rebecca M Santoli, Senior Director of Development for SONY. “The holiday card designs, available only at VistaPrint, exemplify the talent and abilities of people with intellectual disabilities. We hope you will help Special Olympic New York by purchasing Special Olympics holiday cards to send to business associates, friends and family this holiday season.”

These exclusive Special Olympics holiday cards are available only through VistaPrint. They are completely customizable, full color, printed on high-quality paper and available for a low cost. Customers can choose glossy or matte finishes and can purchase cards in quantities ranging from 10 to 20,000 cards. A portion of the proceeds from all Special Olympics cards purchased will be donated to SONY.

For more information go to www.vistaprint.com/sony ■

The 3rd LETR Volleyball tournament results are in

Written by: *Sal Gerbino*

On Saturday, September 24, 2004 the 3rd Annual LETR Volleyball Tournament was again hosted by Hot Shots indoor Beach Volleyball Center in Rochester New York. Event organizer, Sal Gerbino Jr., coordinated the day long event bringing together eight recreational teams for the morning play and twenty Intermediate B and Advanced A teams to carry play up to the finals at 11:00PM. Teams included four person teams at the recreation level and three person teams at the advanced with all playing a round robin format up to the single elimination finals.

The most exciting match of the day turned out to be the finals of the Advanced A's

where Scotty Miller, Jason Croft and Sal Gerbino Jr. closed it out with the win after going undefeated from their second game of pool play on.

Mike Goldfine and Alex Amo manned the silent auction and Torch Run apparel sales table. Two tickets to the Buffalo Bills game were donated and went for \$100 while a new high tech snowboard donated by Hot Shots raised an additional \$105. I am not sure the silent part of the auction was maintained as Goldy and Alex could be seen whispering numbers to people all day long.

Another special moment occurred when

Toni Trieste, the waitress for the restaurant at Hot Shots, donated her tips to the Special Olympics cause. Though she had already emptied her tips once at our table and could have been done for the day, she chose to work some more to round off her donation to an even \$50, every penny she had made. A special thanks to David Shaw who was Sal's right hand man and ran things when Sal was playing.

About \$1200 was raised and a commitment made by all to keep this event going and hopefully growing. ■



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Special Olympics New York, 504 Balltown Road, Schenectady, NY 12304, or e-mail them to ewohlleber@nyso.org.*



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