

Triumph

April 2005



Special Olympics
New York

North East Knights Win the Gold

2005 World Winter Games in Nagano, Japan

Written by Team USA Coaches Janet Riley, Nancy Troiano and Joe Bellini

We departed JFK on February 20th and landed in Los Angeles, California to meet up with the rest of Team USA. At 6:30 a.m. on February 21st the 200 athletes and 50 coaches boarded a jet for Yokoma Air Force Base just outside of Tokyo. After a 3 ½ hour bus ride we arrived in our host town of Matsumoto City. Crowds of children and adults were waving American flags and welcomed us to their



lovely city. Nestled in a valley surrounded by mountains, the views were spectacular and

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A Special Thanks to...

The Fairy Godmothers, of Rochester, who donated two gowns for our females and to Tuxego, of Latham, who donated seven tuxedos for the guys plus two more for their chaperones for the Viennese Opera Ball in January. Anthony Commisso, the owner of Tuxego says "It's a great cause, the athletes are wonderful and they are always so thankful," says Commisso, "I'm just happy to know that I can help the athletes out."

The Viennese Opera Ball was held in New York City. At the event the athlete chorus performed with famous tenor Ronan Tynan. ■

Miss Staten Island Reaches for Her Goal with SONY Onboard

Kimberley Ferdinando to compete for Miss New York

Last November, Kimberley Ferdinando was crowned Miss Staten Island, an accomplishment that she had always dreamed about. "To me, being Miss Staten Island is just as important as being Miss New York or Miss America," said the 23 year-old. "Because this is my hometown and I am able to share it with the people that have helped me my whole life." In June, Kim will be back on the runway when she competes for Miss New York. Kim will be one of 20 women competing.

Being Miss Staten Island brings with it a lot of responsibilities and public appearances which keeps Kim busy almost every

weekend. The honor also brings the opportunity to promote Kim's number one cause, Special Olympics New York. As an Assistant Producer for Dateline/NBC News Productions, she has worked on pieces that have aired on Court TV, A&E, Discovery, Bravo, and National Geography, but her journey started in college at Fordham University.

Kim became involved



Courtesy: Staten Island Advance

with Special Olympics while attending Fordham which holds an annual SONY aquatics and basketball event. After seeing the athletes compete, she was "hooked" and that eventually lead Kim to an internship with SONY in the New York City office.

From there, Kim took her Special Olympics experience across the Atlantic Ocean during a semester abroad

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A Message from the President

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



The recent experience of the Special Olympics World Winter Games in Nagano, Japan serves as a wonderful reminder of how

powerful our mission is for our athletes, families and volunteers, and as a catalyst for change in the world. The athletes assembled there from around the globe provided all who watched with an extraordinary display of abilities, courage, and enthusiastic joy – making it impossible for anyone not to respect, accept and admire them as athletes and as peers.

The athletes who represented the USA from Special Olympics New York did their share to excite and inspire the observers and volunteers at the games. Despite illnesses, injuries and the significant effect of jet-lag, Debi Dempsey, Donna Grillotti, Andrew Beyel, Dan Ritzenberg and the North East Knights Floor Hockey Team provided the world with inspiring perfor-

mances, winning not only medals, but the respect and admiration of everyone they touched. We all need to be extremely proud of our athletes as well as grateful to them, their coaches, families and supporters.

How can I be so sure of the “power of our athletes” and the mission we share? Toward the end of the third day of the Floor Hockey competition, I was speaking with a gentleman, originally from Canada, who was volunteering for the games as a bi-lingual Public Address Announcer at the arena. He related to me with some emotion, that after witnessing the very first day of competition he had returned home moved to tears. He explained that he had felt excited and inspired by our athletes’ ability, courage and determination and somewhat shamed that he never had any real understanding about people with intellectual disabilities. Now at the conclusion of his third day with them, he wanted to know how he could “be out there, on a team with the athletes.”

Congratulations and thank you to each and everyone one of you who play a part in the mission we share. You’ve just got to love what we do !■

Pedal For Medals

New Event in Central NY Region

Pedal for Medals, is a 300-mile bike ride from the Adirondacks to the Finger Lakes to benefit Special Olympics New York (SONY), will take place from June 23-26, 2005. It is an established ride that will benefit SONY starting with the 2005 ride.

The ride passes through some of New York State’s most scenic and historic areas. The terrain from Adirondack peaks and alpine lakes, to the fertile valley and banks of the St. Lawrence Seaway, and from the shores of Lake Ontario to the rolling hills and glacial valleys of the Finger Lakes. All along the way are historic sites from the Revolutionary War and the Underground Railroad. The ride is also well known for the camaraderie of the cyclists, the dedicated support of its volunteers, and its accommodations and support with hotels, meals and full on-road assistance provided.

Cyclists and supporters of Special Olympics New York can register on-line at the ride’s website at pedal4medals.org, or can download the registration form and mail in their registration form with a check for \$25. Riders can register for four, two or one day ride segments with a fundraising commitment of \$600, \$400 or \$200, respectively. For more information, contact Glenn Ivers at 315-473-3177 or givers@nyso.org. ■

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Inspire Greatness

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North East Knights

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so were the people. We experienced Japanese culture firsthand. From traditional musical recitals by elementary school children and drum shows to rice pounding, our first days in Japan were filled with warm people and truly unique experiences. Everywhere we went there were crowds to greet us and cheer. We stayed with host families for two nights and really got a feel for Japanese culture. The city of Matsumoto opened their homes and their hearts to us and made our time there truly unforgettable. On the morning of February 25th, we boarded buses for the City of Nagano and our competition venue. There were plenty of tears as our athletes bonded with their host families and were sad to go.

The sadness of leaving Matsumoto was tempered with the building excitement that we were just hours away from beginning competition. We checked into the Hotel Kokusai 21 and prepared for opening ceremonies. It was awesome! There were athletes and coaches from all over the world. It was amazing to be part of this event.

Our competition went well and we won the gold medal in Division 10. Along the way we played India, Cypress, Singapore, the Isle of Man and Syria. We met athletes from all over the globe and tested our skills on the world stage. The most impressive part of the trip was seeing our athletes adapt to different situations. They performed admirably under the most demanding circumstances. They met every challenge with a smile and their determination saw them through the tournament. It was a once in a lifetime experience.

Closing ceremonies ended with the passing of the flag to the city of Sarajevo, They will host the 2009 Special Olympics World Winter Games. We thank Special Olympics New York for providing us with this wonderful opportunity. It was a truly eye opening and life changing experience. To the people of Japan, thank you for your hospitality, your friendship and the chance to experience your culture. Thanks for the memories! ■

HIGHLIGHTS from World Winter Games

Donna Grillotti

Two Bronze Medals

Long Island athlete Donna Grillotti won 2 Bronze Medals in the 2005 World Winter Games. One for the 500 Meter event and the other for the I-K event. Donna had a great time in Japan and really enjoyed meeting people from all over the world. Donna loves to keep in contact with people she meets when she's on vacation and this trip was no different. Donna met a lot of people and got phone numbers and addresses to keep in touch with all of them. One of the off the course highlights in Japan came when Donna and a group of athletes visited a school. A local newspaper was covering the event and the next day Donna's picture was in a Japanese newspaper.



Debrah Dempsey

A Silver and Bronze Medal

At 46, Deborah was one of the oldest skiers to compete in the World Games, but she didn't let her age slow her down. In fact she didn't even let a 103 degree temperature slow her down. After Deborah skied for the Silver Medal in the Advanced Downhill on Monday, she came down with a fever. On Wednesday when she was set to compete in the Alpine Advanced Giant Slalom, the team physician advised her not to ski. Deborah didn't want to let her cold keep her off the slopes so she went out there and gave it her best even though she wasn't at 100%. Deborah gave it her best under the circumstances and she finished 4th. On Friday, Deborah was back on the slopes and feeling better and her time of 1:55:99 earned her the Bronze Medal in the Alpine Advanced Slalom.



Andrew Beyel

A Gold and Silver Medal

Andrew Beyel has been competing in Special Olympics New York for two years but he never thought his training would lead him to the World Games. Andy was practicing Monday morning and unfortunately fell on the course, spraining his shoulder. He returned with his team on Tuesday for the 5k, ending in 6th place and a final time that wasn't nearly as impressive as his qualifying time. On Thursday Andy competed in the 10K, on the biggest hill on the course, and fell on the same injured shoulder. He was in extreme pain with 3 1/2 miles still to go. The crowd and his coaches encouraged Andy to get up and keep going and he did. Andrew crossed the finish line for a silver medal holding one pole under a limp arm and shoulder. Special Olympics CEO Timothy Shriver happened to be visiting the cross country venue when Beyel was the first to be introduced. He had definitely made an impression on those who cheered him on for the finish. Andy also brought home a Gold Medal in the Cross Country 4x 1K Relay Freestyle.

Dan Ritzenberg

Silver Medal

Saratoga Springs native Dan Ritzenberg has been competing in SONY for 15 years. Dan competes in skiing, basketball, bowling, golf, softball, volleyball and he is also a top equestrian athlete. Dan competed in three events in the 2005 World Winter Games and came home with a Silver Medal. Dan finished 6th in the Advanced Giant Slalom, 5th in the Advanced Downhill. It was the Advanced Slalom where Dan broke into medal contention. On his final run in the Advanced Slalom, Dan was cruising down the course with the finish line in sight, when all of a sudden he started to lose his balance. With one leg in the air and the other keeping him on the course, Dan's family was nervously watching. They continued to cheer him on and just when it looked like Dan would fall he caught his balance, got his ski down and cruised passed the finish line earning a Silver Medal.



Miss Staten Island

where she also interned for Special Olympics Madrid. Kim even got five other students involved to work in the office.

When Kim returned from her semester adventure, she continued to help SONY with both the Metro Tournament and the Duck Race. "I just love the athletes and I can not think of a better cause to be working for," says Kim. "When I spend time with Special Olympics athletes, whether it be in Spain or Staten Island, I am always enchanted by their hearts, inspired by their bravery, and humbled by their spirit. Special Olympics is truly a global organization, and I've witnessed its benefits transcend cultural and language barriers."

When she won the Miss Staten Island pageant one of the first calls she made was to Rich Salinardi, who became SONY

Chairman in January. "He was so excited for me," said Kim. "The Staten Island region is like a family to me, they've taken me in and I love it."



Neal J. Johnson, Kimberley Ferdinando and Richard Salinardi at the Coney Island Polar Plunge.

Kim recently attended the Coney Island New Year's Day Polar Plunge that benefited SONY. "Neal (Johnson) thanked me, but I feel I should be thanking him for bringing me into the SONY family," said Kim. "I should also be thanking Rich Salinardi for

inviting me into the Staten Island family. I don't know if I could ever give back all that the athletes have given me, I wish I could do this as a full time job."

Kim just celebrated her 23rd birthday, with a fundrasing birthday party where more than \$3,000 was raised for Special Olympics New York. ■

Softball in the Snow

The weather on February 19th was typical for Oswego with plenty of snow on the ground, the temperature in the teens and a stiff breeze off Lake Ontario. A perfect day for a softball game!

For this 18th edition of Softball in the Snow, more than 100 hearty ballplayers and volunteers bundled up and gave it their best shot for Special Olympics New York. Though the conditions made fielding and running difficult, it did not diminish the enthusiasm and good spirits of these dedicated boosters.

Co-chaired by Kay Pullen and Kory Donovan, who have devoted a combined 34 years to Special Olympics, the event netted more than \$2,000 for the cause. Led by Oswego Growers and Shippers with \$300, more than a dozen businesses and service organizations pitched in with \$1,275 in corporate support. Others donated food, drink and in-kind contributions. ■

Keeping Athletes Healthy

The objectives of the SSONY Healthy Athletes initiative is to improve access to health care for Special Olympics athletes, to train and educate health care professionals and students about the special needs of people with intellectual disabilities and to raise awareness of the health issues facing this population. SONY's Healthy Athletes program is the second largest in the world, second only to China. In 2004 SONY received over \$170,000 in grants for this initiative.

The Healthy Athletes program consists of *Special Smiles, Healthy Hearing, Fit Feet, Sun Safety, Health Promotions, and Opening Eyes*. Providing these services at competitions enables Special Olympics athletes to spend time with a clinician in a patient-friendly, private setting. Athletes can have their eyes, feet, skin, ears and dental work examined, and if necessary, leave the screening with a referral for more care.

"Special Olympics is in no way trying

to enter the health care field," said Neal J. Johnson, president and chief executive officer of Special Olympics New York. "However it is an important part of our mission to serve the entire athlete, and that includes helping them be as healthy as they can be."

Healthy Athletes was created by Washington, D.C. based Special Olympics, Inc. in 1996 in an effort to improve each athlete's ability to train and compete. In New York alone, more than 8,000 athletes were offered screenings at 10 competitions in 2004. Healthy Athletes is sponsored by the New York

State Health Department of Health, Lions Club International and HealthNow New York.

In addition, as part of the Special Olympics Healthy Athletes effort SONY has designated all training and competitions as Tobacco Free. Smoking and use of other tobacco products is not permitted at any venue, except in specifically designated outdoor areas.

This practice has been put into place in an effort to protect the athletes, volunteers, spectators and staff from the harmful effects of tobacco. This practice also

reflects Olympic tradition, as well as community and sports expectations regarding the hosting of sporting events. ■



Special Olympics

Healthy Athletes™

Keeping the Flame Lit

When the Olympic Cauldron is lit at Opening Ceremonies, the Flame of Hope serves as a beacon to the athletes and spectators. It inspires each athlete to do their best in competition and serves as a reminder of the incredible spirit of the athletes competing.

Keeping the Flame of Hope lit is what our Major Gifts and Planned Giving program is all about. The Olympiad Society is the opportunity to support training programs creatively, in a process

that adapts to the changing needs and wishes of you, the donor. By working with our staff and your tax and legal advisors you can make your charitable contribution to Special Olympics New York in ways that maximize your personal objectives while minimizing the after-tax cost. We hope that you will consider membership in the Olympiad.

Gifts can be made in any size and in many ways: cash, stock, real estate, life insurance, personal property and bequests to name a few. Depending on the asset given or the gift arrangement, you can expect to enjoy some or all of these benefits:

- Fulfill your philanthropic goal
- Reduce income tax
- Avoid capital gains tax
- Retain a stream of payments for life
- Increase spendable income
- Eliminate federal estate tax on property
- Reduce time and cost for estate settlement

Here's how your gift can help Special Olympics New York athletes.



Your gift increases training and competitive experiences for our athletes. More athletes will be attracted to and retained by Special Olympics.

Your gift enhances the sports experi-

ence. Your gift will enable Special Olympics athletes to enjoy access to the same quality program, regardless of where in New York they live.

You can double or even triple the value of your gift if you or your spouse work for a company that offers a matching gift program. Complete a matching gift form, available through your company's benefits department, and submit it to Special Olympics New York along with your gift – it's that easy.

Charitable gifts make an important difference in what we are able to accomplish for the athletes. Donor dollars are directed to training and competition opportunities, inspiring the best in our 40,000 athletes.

A gift to Special Olympics New York will help carry the torch forward as we celebrate our 35th Anniversary in 2005. Thirty five years of sports training and competition for children and adults with intellectual disability mean a lifetime of opportunity, of achievement, of going where many said these athletes never would... to the top of the podium!

Your gift will insure that each and every eligible child and adult who wishes may enjoy the thrill of sports. To find out more about the Olympiad Society, and the various ways of making a gift to Special Olympics New York, please contact Laurie Kennedy in our Development Office or email her at lkennedy@nyso.org. Fuel the Fire! ■

My "Miles for Medals" Experience

Nobody could have been more skeptical than I at the Miles for Medals kickoff meeting last March. I hobbled into the conference room on my crutches, having recently shattered my left tibia in a ski accident in the French Alps. Here was this SONY staff woman from upstate who knew diddly about Long Island telling us that we could raise money by getting people to walk 2 ½ miles around the Hofstra campus. Fuggedabout it! This is downstate and people on Long Island aren't going to turn out for one more fundraising walk! At least that's what I thought. Besides, it would be months before I could get on a tennis court again, much less deal with this harebrained scheme.

Suddenly it came to me at home. Why not convert my injury into a fundraiser? Before I knew it I was emailing everyone I

knew, including the parents of my tennis athletes. The theme was that I felt it was important to give something back to Special Olympics New York and I would make it a personal crusade to walk the 2 ½ miles with my tennis team in June. Of course it represented quite a therapy goal and both my orthopedist and my physical therapist were dubious.

One thing about being a gimp is that you've got time to send out emails! I kept my mailing list up to date during my therapy and kept urging them to join us at Miles for Medals. I couldn't believe the response! Checks came in by mail and when the day of the walk arrived, I was overwhelmed at the number of people who showed up – with money! Walker's



Walkers turned out to be the biggest contingent and raised more than \$2,500. I was amazed when I found out that Miles for Medals took in over \$40,000 for Special Olympics New York. What a triumph! As if

that weren't enough, I got some marvelous volunteers for the Summer Games the following weekend. Oh and one small victory for me was that I did complete that walk – foam boot and all.

I'm not sure what I'll do for an encore but I do know one thing: if you ask them people will turn out to walk for Special Olympics New York - especially for athletes and coaches that they know personally. ■

Ken Walker

Tennis Director – SONY, LI

TORCH RUN TIMES

Law Enforcement Torch Run News

Polar Plunges Pour in Support for SONY

A new Polar Plunge and another that continues to grow

Fishkill Polar Plunge

Sixty-seven Plungers jumped into the frigid water at Camp Mariah on Sunday, February 27th, to raise money, at the 7th Annual Fishkill Polar Plunge. In addition to the many brave plungers more than 200 people stood on the shore to take in the event. "It was a great day," said Jeanne Grebert, Director of Development. "The plungers raised a lot of money and their enthusiasm was definitely contagious. Through their efforts this event gets bigger and better each year," said Grebert.

After getting cold and wet the plungers were served lunch to warm them up, but not until every last dollar was raised. One exceptionally brave

plunger wasn't finished when he got out of the water. For \$50 he agreed to do a snow angel in just his trunks. The frigid feat raised \$64.

Once again, Local Organizer Chris Hamel helped insure a successful event. "Chris did a great job in pulling everything together," said Chris Porreca, Director of Development. "He deserves a lot of credit for this event. The Fishkill Polar Plunge is one of our best events in the state and its thanks to Hamel's hard work and dedication."

Athlete Ann Hertel also made the plunge and raised \$340 dollars, for the

second year in a row, the Law Enforcement team with the most plungers was Green Haven Correctional Facility, and the team which raised the most money was the New York State Court Officers of Dutchess County who pulled in \$3,400.

Long Island Polar Plunge

On Saturday, March 5, 2005, the Long Island Region held its first Polar Plunge at Bar Beach in Port Washington. The weather cooperated, in that it wasn't snowing, and it was a balmy 40 degrees. Earlier in the week it snowed, but through the hard work of our partners at the Town of North Hempstead all the snow on the parking lot and the surrounding area was shoveled.

Dozens of plungers joined Chief Kilfoil of the Port Washington Police Department, jumped in the cold waters of Hempstead Harbor.

Town of North Hempstead Supervisor, John Kaiman also attended the inaugural Long Island Polar Plunge. Had it not been for him the location of the polar plunge could not have been made possible.

"Our plungers and those that came to watch them, all had a great time," said Heidi Lindsay, regional director of the Long Island Region. "Our inaugural polar plunge was a big success and we hope to build on that success in the years to come." ■



New York LETR Chairman Runs Final Leg

Chief Mike Benson is one of the Guardians of the Flame

Written by Chief Mike Benson

February 17, 2005 I left Buffalo, New York and traveled to Tokyo, Japan to participate in the Law Enforcement Torch Run Final Leg for the 2005 World Winter Games in Nagano, Japan. I was to join seventy-five brothers and sisters in law enforcement to be the Guardians of the Flame of Hope. This is what law enforcement officers from all over the world do with their participation with the Torch Run. It is more than raising money, working with athletes, attracting sponsors, etc... But, we also spread awareness that people with intellectual disabilities are useful members of society.

I knew that the next ten days would be busy, but I never expected to participate in such a wonderful event that also raised so much awareness. The Law Enforcement Torch Run mission in Japan was to take the Flame of Hope to Japan and insure that when the Final Leg Runners went home, the flame would stay and burn bright.

You see, as a Guardian of the Flame it is our mission to insure that everyday there is awareness that people with intellectual disabilities have a place in society. Our goal is for all people with intellectual disabilities to have the chance to become useful and productive citizens who are

accepted and respected in their communities.

Our mission was successful. The Torch made it through over eighty cities, towns, and villages in Japan. We spent most of the time in Nagano, the home of 1998 Winter Olympics. The Japanese people were extremely friendly and made me feel at home. Although the culture was different, these people opened their arms to us and embraced our message. That is, to keep the Flame of Hope alive.

With the Flame of Hope burning bright in Japan, Special Olympics athletes will carry greater self-confidence, a more positive self-image, improved physical fitness and motor skills and friendships. They will carry these attributes with them



Chief Mike Benson with Eunice Kennedy-Shriver at World Games.

into their daily lives at home, in the classroom, on the job and in the community. Families who participate become stronger as they learn a greater appreciation of their athlete's talents. Community volunteers find out what good friends the athletes can be. And everyone learns more about the capabilities of people with mental retardation.

All of us can keep the Flame of Hope Alive. ■

2005 LETR Apparel Now on Sale

Remember to order today.

Contact: 1 800-836-6976 or 518 388-0793

Fax: 518 388-0795

Email: jgrebert@nyso.org

Mail: 504 Balltown Road, Schenectady, NY 12304

New York LETR Honors Fallen Officer

New York LETR and Special Olympics New York honors Officer Scott E. Bryant. Officer Bryant was carrying the Flame of Hope in Iowa when he was struck by a car and killed last year. In keeping his memory alive we will be placing this statement on all LETR T-shirts: "In memory and honor of Scott E. Bryant, 5/17/04, Special Olympics Iowa LETR".





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Special Olympics New York, Inc. is authorized and accredited by Special Olympics International for the benefit of citizens with intellectual disabilities, including mental retardation.

Don't forget to send your letters to the editor. Submit letters to Eric Wohlleber, Special Olympics New York, 504 Balltown Road, Schenectady, NY 12304, or e-mail them to ewohlleber@nyso.org.



PHOTO OF THE MONTH

Fans in Japan.

Chief Mike Benson, one of the Guardians of the Flame with a fellow LETR member and some new Special Olympics fans.

SONY's mission is to provide sports training and athletic competition to individuals with intellectual disabilities, including mental retardation. Our programs are designed to offer participants continuing opportunities to enjoy sports, develop physical fitness and demonstrate courage while interacting with their families, the community and other Special Olympics athletes.