

Triumph

March 2005



Special Olympics
New York

Athletes Shine at Winter Games in Syracuse

Nearly 1,100 athletes and coaches participate in Winter Games

The Special Olympics New York 2005 Winter Games presented by P&C Food and Pharmacy brought nearly 1,100 athletes and coaches plus more than 500 volunteers to Syracuse from February 11-13 for a weekend of memorable moments. It started on Friday night with the Opening Ceremonies which were held at Driver's Village Conference Center, in Cicero. "The Driver's Village facility was great," said Associate Director of Development, Chris Porreca, who was also one of the organizers of the event. "There was plenty of space the staff there was very helpful and you could see that the athletes really

enjoyed themselves."

The Opening Ceremonies were emceed by The New York Lottery's, Yolanda Vega and Sunny 102's Brenda Bissett. The energy filled the room once the first athletes were announced and the excitement was at a fevered



From Left to right: Female Athlete of the Year, Maryann Silverstrim, Male Athlete of the Year, Paul Asaro, and Global Messenger Diane Budnar help Neal J. Johnson officially open the 2005 Winter Games!

pitch until the ceremonies wrapped up. The Opening Ceremonies featured the Syracuse University Cheerleaders, a juggler, and

larger than life-sized puppets. Dr. Daryl Gross, the new Athletic Director at Syracuse University made his first public appearance at the Opening Ceremonies and told the athletes that they were inspiring and urged them to continue to reach for their goals. As the Ceremonies drew to a close the lights went down and the Flame of Hope arrived, being carried by Syracuse athletes Megan O'Hara and Ryan Goldacker. Once the torch was lit it was time to officially open the Winter Games.

The Competitions started at 9 a.m. on Saturday in what was an action-packed day. The athletes competed in 7 Olympic-style events including floor hockey, floor hockey skills, figure skating, speed skating, alpine skiing, nordic skiing, and snowshoeing. Most of the events took place at the Oncenter, with nordic and snowshoeing taking place at Highland Forest and

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SONY Athletes Get International Attention

Documentary to shine light on treatment of people with intellectual disabilities

A Japanese television station wanted to produce a documentary on some of the athletes who were going to be competing in the 2005 World Winter Games. The television station chose the North East Knights floor hockey team out of Westchester County. The reason for the documentary was to show people in Japan that our athletes are functioning members of society. In Japan many people with intellectual disabilities are still shut out of society. The North East

Knights coaches wrote about the team's experience with the film crew:

On January 19th we had the pleasure of having a film crew from Japan come to visit us. What a great experience! The film crew consisted of two women and one man from Japan as well as Naoko, a woman from California, Naoko was our contact person here in the states.

Our athletes were excited about their arrival. Many came to practice with a hair cut or a new sweat suit! Our guests were

greeted with friendly smiles as well as plenty of questions about their country and their customs. The language barrier was a little difficult at first, but with patience and caring from both sides everyone was understood. Our Head Coach, Joe Bellini led practice as usual. We first had our warm-ups, then went into some drills and finished up with a game. The camera guy sure was busy he was running up and

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Find up-to-date information on our official Web site, www.specialolympicsNY.org, and visit www.soshopping.com

A Message from the President

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



The 2005 State Winter Games are now behind us and I wanted to share with you a moment at the Opening Ceremonies that I thought captures what Special Olympics is all about. We wanted to

honor our World Games athletes at the Opening Ceremonies and with the help of the Syracuse University Cheerleaders the crowd chanted U-S-A! U-S-A! throughout the Ceremonies. The Team USA members walked into the Ceremonies with the American Flag and the crowd was screaming. Once the cheering quieted down, the National Anthem played and as I looked into the faces of our Team USA athletes you could see the pride in their eyes. Many of the athletes were emotional and who can blame them?

These athletes will be in Nagano, Japan not only representing Special Olympics New York, but the entire United States, what an awesome experience it will be for them. To be able to represent your country in sports competition in front of the entire world is something that only a small number of people can lay claim to, and it's an experience that these athletes will carry with them forever.

To think that through Special Olympics these 20 athletes have overcome so many

obstacles, both personally and in the case of the North East Knights as a team and they have already achieved so much. Now they are among the best Special Olympic athletes the world has to offer and who knows how far their talents will take them. On behalf of Special Olympics New York I would like to congratulate these 20 athletes and wish them the best of luck in the World Games. You are all champions in our minds!

North East Knights

Troy Ackerly, Richard Bouman, Keith Caminiti, Anna Charitou, Richard Dammann, Michael Danko, Greg DiRoma, Ricky Hunt, Marilyn Lewis, Max Maksimyadis, Annemarie O'Sullivan, Frank Ragusa, Paul Ryder, William Smith, Andrew Stawicki, and Nicole Waag.

Nordic Skiers

Donna Grillotti and Andrew Beyel

Alpine Skiers

Daniel Ritzenberg and Deborah Dempsey

Continued from P1

down the court trying to keep up with all the action. They seemed pleased with the practice and the footage they shot that evening.

The film crew came back the next night. At the request of the crew we tried to slow things down a little to give the camera man a chance to get some "good shots". Our athletes played with great gusto and never skipped a beat because of the camera. It was obvious that the athletes were enjoying the attention and making new friends with the crew. However, they never let the filming interfere with their hard work during practice.

A couple of days later, on January 22nd we attended the Peter Aquilone Memorial Floor Hockey Tournament at the Jacob Javits Center in New York City. Once again the film crew was there and what a greeting they received from our athletes! You would have thought that they were long lost friends. Both the film crew and the athletes were very relaxed with each other. There were more conversations taking place. The crew knew just who they wanted to film of course the athletes were extremely cooperative. The crew must have had a successful day because our team sure did. We played against three teams: Bronx, Queens, and Clarkstown and we won all three games, allowing us to take home the GOLD. It was an exciting and enjoyable day for all.

We're happy to say that even before we make our trip to Japan, we know that we have a few new friends waiting for us. Nagano, here we come! ■

Triumph

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Inspire Greatness

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Dear Editor:

Each week cell phone ads flood our newspapers and airwaves, encouraging us to upgrade to the newest technology. But what happens to all of the outdated equipment? Most of the estimated 130 million wireless phones discarded annually are merely thrown away, polluting our landfills.

Special Olympics is proud to say that we will help with the solution by announcing the Recycle for Special Olympics cell phone recycling program. Used phones can now be recycled to be refurbished and to raise funds to provide sports training and competition to Special Olympics athletes. For each phone recycled through the program, Special Olympics will receive from \$1 to \$100.

As a sports movement, we provide training and competition to thousands of people with intellectual disabilities throughout our state, and almost 1.4 million athletes train and compete worldwide. Many people don't realize that intellectual disability is the largest disability population in the world and here in New York there are 40,000 people who benefit from Special Olympics.

This population often has been shunned from society, ignored, teased and underestimated, but at Special Olympics we celebrate our athletes' contributions and we invite you to join us in our goal of transforming lives.

To recycle your outdated phone, please visit www.specialolympics.org/recycle and help save the environment and change a life.

Sincerely,

Rebecca M Santoli
Special Olympics New York

There's a First Time for Everything

It was only a few months ago when eight year old Joanna Ramsay of Long Island put on her first pair of ice skates. And it was then that Joanna first became a Special Olympics athlete.

When Joanna joined the Long Island Region's program, her coaches, Nick Mort and Kim Johnston, approached the staff about purchasing the Skate Coach Early Skating Trainer. By having this tool, which looks like a "walker," Nick and Kim worked with Joanna one on one to teach her how to ice skate.

The most exciting aspect of all of this is that after two months of training with an ice skating assistance tool, Joanna is now skating independently. In addition, she has already taken home her very first Special Olympics gold medal at Long Island's Regional Figure Skating Competition in January. Before her gold medal experience, Joanna would sing her own little ice skating jingle when leaving practice. Now she is heard singing before and after, "I love ice skating! Ice skating is great!"

As all of our athletes do, Joanna Ramsay lights up the room whenever she arrives. Her smile, excitement, energy and courage are amazing. Joanna's series of "firsts" go beyond Special Olympics as well. She was most recently presented with the Award of Excellence in photography for a photograph taken of her mother with two of her friends.

Joanna is one of the many shining examples of the Athlete Oath, "Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt!" ■

Elsmere Eagles take on Elmira College Hockey Team

Longstanding Rivalry Renewed

For the past 21 years the Elsmere Eagles floor hockey team has suited up and battled the Elmira College hockey team. The two teams renewed acquaintances in January as the Elsmere Eagles prepared for the Winter Games.

The Elmira College Screaming Eagles jumped out to a quick 6-0 but SONY athletes weren't about to give up. With the guidance of Elsmere Eagles coach Tom Walton, and the excellent play of the team, they got back on track. The Elsmere Eagles had just won the silver medal at the regional games in Rochester and this game was a chance to get some extra competition in before heading to the Winter Games in Syracuse.

In the end the Elsmere Eagles beat the Elmira College Screaming Eagles. Chris Mann, a senior Soaring Eagles hockey player, said he's participated all four years of his college career. Chris told the *Star-Gazette*, "I like to come here and have fun with them," he said. "The best part is seeing the smiles on their faces." ■



Turn Old Into Gold

Recycle your cell phone for Special Olympics

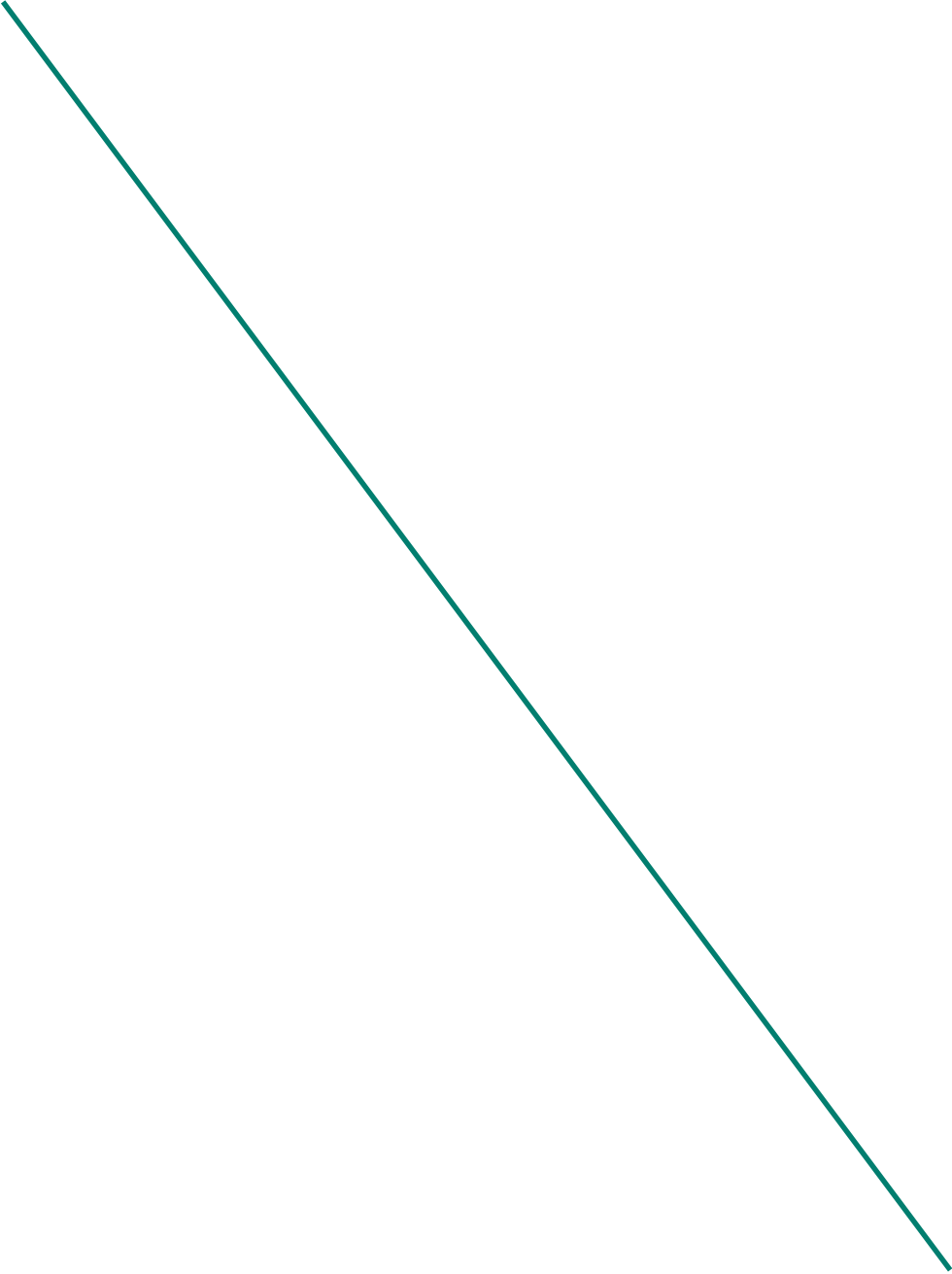
Turn your unwanted cell phones into cash to support Special Olympics and help provide sports training and competition opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities.

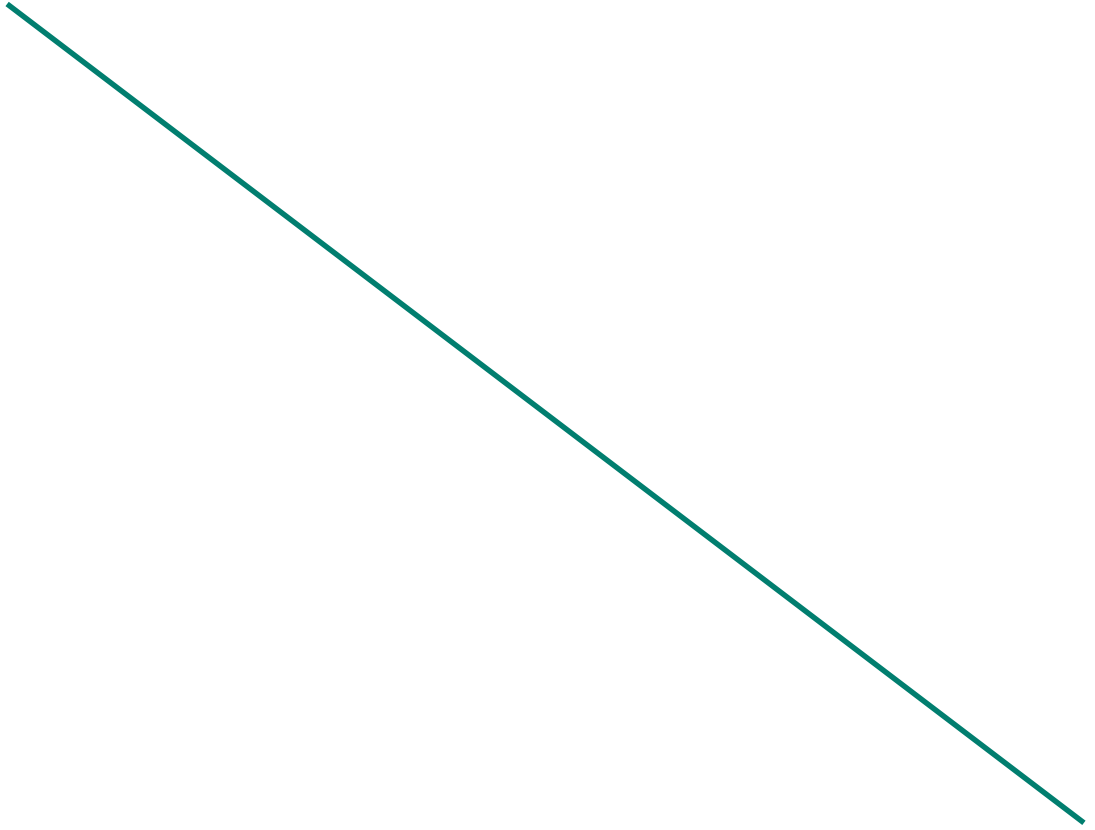
Don't toss your old cell phone. Recycle for Special Olympics and turn your old phone into gold for Special Olympic! Find out more at www.specialolympics.org/recycle.

The Recycle for Special Olympics promotion runs from February 1, 2005, through January 31, 2006. Special Olympics will receive a minimum of \$1 to more than \$100 per donated phone. RMS Communications Group, the cell phone recycler, has guaranteed a minimum donation to Special Olympics of \$250,000.



www.specialolympics.org/recycle





TORCH RUN TIMES

Law Enforcement Torch Run News

Record Number Plunge and Pledge for Special Olympics

5th Annual Rochester Polar Plunge, biggest ever

The weather was warm, warm for Rochester, but the water in Lake Ontario was anything but warm. An hour before the 5th Annual Rochester Polar Plunge to benefit Special Olympics New York (SONY) the water temperature was a chilly 34 degrees. But the freezing cold water couldn't keep away the plungers.

"It was a great day, the weather could not have been any better," said Sgt. Sal Gerbino of the Gates Police Department, who serves as the Polar Plunge's organizer. "It was in the 40's and that just got the plungers all revved up." The polar plunges across the state are Law Enforcement Torch Run (LETR) events to benefit Special Olympics New York. "This event just gets bigger and bigger each year," said Director of Development, Jeanne Grebert. "Sal and his family do a great job and put their heart and soul into this event and we're proud to have them as part of our family."

Beginning at 9 a.m. the plungers started registering and they kept coming until noon, when the more than 400 plungers were lead to the beach by the Flame of Hope, being carried by SONY athletes Andy Marshall, Kevin Brown, Timmy Rowland and organizer Sal Gerbino. Once the procession made it to the water, wave upon wave of plungers threw themselves into icy Lake Ontario, all for a good cause and the amusement of friends and family who came out to watch.

"It was a record breaking year for the Rochester Polar Plunge," said SONY President and Chief Executive Officer Neal J. Johnson. "We set records for both the number of plungers and the amount of money raised. We can't thank Sal and his crew enough for all that they do to make this Polar Plunge one of the best in the state."

The 5th Annual Polar Plunge was sponsored by The New York Lottery, New York State United Teachers, NYSCOB, Wal-Mart, LogicalSolutions.net, Hot Shots Indoor Beach Volleyball, City of Rochester Fire Department, Gates Automotive, Home

Depot, Heuther Heating, Monroe County Sheriffs Department and STI Specialty Tools, Inc., Monroe Ambulance and Greece Ridge. ■



2005 Law Enforcement Torch Run®

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*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.*



Picture of the Month:

Japanese TV cameraman gets shots of the North East Knights after they won the Gold Medal at the Peter Aquilone Memorial Floor Hockey Tournament. ■

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.