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Second Plane Pull Approaching

Time is running out to sign up for LETR event in Rochester.

Members of the Law Enforcement Torch Run (LETR) are still accepting teams into this year's second Plane Pull to benefit Special Olympics New York.

The Plane Pull, which will be held Aug. 25, will be part of The Tops International Wings and Wheels Air Show – a family oriented event that spans two days at the Rochester International Airport.

Beginning at noon, teams of 20 will compete to see who can pull the JetBlue Airbus A-320 12 feet in the fastest time. Corporate teams and law enforcement teams will compete for the trophies awarded to the top three teams. There will also be a

category for the fastest emergency services team.

The Plane Pull is being presented by the Greater Rochester International Airport and JetBlue.

Registration is \$1,000 per team. For more information, call Sgt. Sal Gerbino at 716-747-2234, or Jeanne Mesick at Special Olympics New York, 800-836-6976. ■



Mission: To provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-style sports for children and adults with mental retardation, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in the sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

Triumph



Special Olympics New York • AUGUST 2001

Poughkeepsie Police Officer To Scale Mt. Kilimanjaro

Fund-raising climb will benefit Special Olympics New York.

Sgt. Annmarie Spiciarich was looking for a way to do more for Special Olympics. Boy, did she find one. Spiciarich, a City of Poughkeepsie police officer, has announced she will attempt to climb the highest peak on the African continent to raise money for Special Olympics athletes across New York.

She will be part of an expedition leaving Sept. 21 to ascend Mt. Kilimanjaro,

which also has the distinction of being the highest freestanding mountain in the world. The 14-year veteran of the Poughkeepsie PD has begun soliciting pledges, all of which she will donate to the Law Enforcement Torch Run to Benefit Special Olympics New York.



Sgt. Spiciarich

Poughkeepsie PD

"I'm lucky to be at this point in my life where I can attempt a climb like this," said Spiciarich, 41. "I felt guilty doing it for no other reason than just to do it. If I can do it,

"Just put one foot in front of the other." - Sgt. Spiciarich

then I should be doing it to help others." Spiciarich's 12-person team will attempt to summit Mt. Kilimanjaro from the western breach, which is steeper, more rugged and less traveled than other points of ascent. In addition, it has no manmade shelters like other, more popular routes.

While travel brochures play down the physical demands of such climbs, and while they tend to tout the minimal climbing skill needed to reach the top, only about 50 percent of those who attempt to reach even one of the lower peaks are successful,

Continued on p. 6

Fall Games Return to Picturesque Ulster County

More than 1,200 athletes and coaches will participate in both 2001 and 2002.

The stage is now being set for the 2001 Fall Games, to be held Oct. 5 to 7 in Saugerties, at the foot of the Catskill Mountains.

Twelve-hundred athletes and coaches are expected to participate in Cross-Country, Cycling, Equestrian, Golf, Soccer and Softball.

Saugerties last hosted the Fall Games in 1993 and 1994. Prior to that, the Ulster County community hosted the games in 1989 and 1990. The idyllic Catskills have become a favorite home away from home for Special Olympics New York, as several Winter Games competitions also have been held there over the years.

"We are real happy to be returning to Ulster County," said Walter Kopczuk, vice president for Program. "The community has been very supportive in the past and the setting for competitions is outstanding."

Opening Ceremonies will be held at 8 p.m., Oct. 5. Competitions are all day Saturday, Oct. 6, followed by Closing Ceremonies and the Victory Dance beginning at 8 p.m.

Special Olympics New York has begun an awareness campaign to recruit volunteers and sponsors, and educate the community about the games and about the Special Olympics movement. Jim and Barbara Griffis of Saugerties have agreed to



serve as co-chairs and will lead the volunteer Local Organizing Committee as it plans and

Continued on p. 7

An Update on Regionalization, Pages 4 and 5

What's INSIDE

3 Starry Weekend 6 Pellegrino's Ace 8 Plane Pull

A Message from the President

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



They sit on rooftops until the community donates enough money to lure them down. They spend hundreds of hours planning Polar Plunges and then convince people to pay for the opportunity to jump into icy water. They convince their

friends – uniformed and civilian – to risk bodily harm by pulling a passenger jet across an airport tarmac.

Now, one of them will climb the highest freestanding mountain in the world to raise money for our athletes.

That's right, as this month's cover story points out, Sgt. Annmarie Spiciarich of the City of Poughkeepsie, will travel to Tanzania, Africa, in September to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro. She has begun a personal, statewide campaign to raise funds to support our training and competition programs, not to pay for her expenses, but to donate to Special Olympics.

From a societal perspective, law enforcement officers are heroes for the work they do day after day. It would seem that their police work would be enough to satisfy their desire to help their fellow man. It isn't. They have a higher calling, and we are very lucky to call them our friends.

Annmarie's climb presents another opportunity for Special Olympics to help showcase the good work being done by law enforcement officers on behalf of our athletes. Too often we hear of a darker side of the profession. The dark side is news, however, because it is so uncommon.

Annmarie is an example of how police and correctional officers have raised their level of commitment to our athletes.

She will tell you that, "Cops always root for an underdog." She'll downplay her generosity by saying, "I was going to Kilimanjaro anyway, so why not climb for a cause." We know she's being modest. When Annmarie Spiciarich made the decision that her attempt to climb the highest peak in Africa would be done for the athletes of Special Olympics New York, her motivation rose higher than Kilimanjaro itself. Her training became more intense. Her effort to reach out to her fellow colleagues around the state became more focused.

Those qualities have served her well as a police officer, and they will serve her well when she is standing on the African plain staring up at her mammoth challenge.

Good luck, Annmarie. ■

2001 Calendar of Events

August

- 6 Summer Golf Classic, Oak Hill Country Club, Rochester
- 25 Law Enforcement Torch Run Plane Pull, Greater Rochester International Airport

September

- 8 Sections 3 & 4 Equestrian, Skidmore College Stables, Saratoga Springs
- 8 Section 5 Softball, Bergman Park, Jamestown
- 15 Sections 3, 4 & 5 Soccer & Softball, Collins Parks, Scotia
- 22 Fall Classic, Sections 1 & 2, Cantiague Park, Hicksville
- 28 Climb to Mt. Kilimanjaro to benefit the Law Enforcement Torch Run

October

- 5-7 2001 Fall Games, Saugerties
- 17 Real Estate & Construction Gala, Sheraton, New York City
- 20 Section 2 Bowling, Bowling Time Lanes, New Windsor
- 20 Section 3 Adult Bowling, (Age 22+) Pine Lanes, South Glens Falls
- 20 Section 4 Adult Bowling, (Age 22+) Oswego
- 28 Section 1 Bowling, Gil Hodges Lanes, Batavia

November

- 3-4 Bowling West, AMF Olympic Lanes, Rochester
- 9-11 Bowling Central, Utica
- 9-10 Bowling East (Age 22)
- 16-18 Fall Leadership Conference, Queensbury Hotel, Glens Falls

For more details please contact your Director of Field Services or the Special Olympics New York office.

Triumph

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Inspire Greatness

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Fall Games Return to Picturesque Ulster County

Continued from p. 1



An athlete handing off a pitch during the 2000 Fall Games.

File photo

carries out the competition and celebration.

"We consider it an honor to be asked to co-chair the Local Organizing Committee," said Jim Griffis. "Barbara and I have both been active in the community for many years. We are both very committed to helping in the success of this event and we also want to showcase our community."

Jim is a retired insurance agent and sales manager, and served six years as the Town of Saugerties supervisor. Barbara is retired from more than two decades as the Village of Saugerties treasurer.

"It's a great program that Special Olympics provides," Barbara said. "You do things for athletes who would not have an opportunity to compete otherwise."

All but two competitions (Golf and Equestrian) will be held at Cantine Memorial Complex in the Village of Saugerties. The Complex played an important role in bringing the Games back to Saugerties.

"It provides the opportunity for athletes to observe other sports and cheer on other athletes," Kopzcuk said. "And it affords family members a chance to interact with other families."

The Fall Games is one of three statewide competitions held each year in New York and one of more than 400 competitions held across the state annually at either the local or sectional level.

For more information, or to volunteer, call 800-836-6976. ■

Fall Sectional Competition Season is Here

Athletes and coaches around the state are preparing for the upcoming fall sports season. Competitions will be held in Softball, Soccer, Equestrian, Cycling, Cross-Country, Golf and Bowling.

Bocce is becoming more popular and has been added to the Fall Classic Sectional in Long Island. A goal of many of the athletes is to attend the Fall Games in Saugerties or one of the three state Bowling competitions in November.

For more information on the Sections 1 and 2 competitions, call Director of Program Melissa Gross at 212-661-3963. For Sections 3, 4, or 5, call Director of Field Services Erin Griffiths at 518-388-0791. ■



Soccer is one of the sports being offered at the Fall Sectionals.

File photo

Sectionals

Sept. 8	Sections 3 & 4 Equestrian	Skidmore College Saratoga Springs
Sept. 8	Section 5 Softball	Bergman Park Jamestown
Sept. 15	Sections 3, 4, & 5 Softball/Soccer	Collins Park Scotia
Sept. 22	Fall Classic (Sections 1 & 2)	Cantiague Park Hicksville
Oct. 20	Section 2 Bowling	Pat Tarsio Lanes New Windsor
Oct. 20	Section 4 Bowling	Lakeview Lanes Oswego
Oct. 20	Section 3 Bowling	Pine Lanes South Glens Falls
Oct. 28	Section 1 Bowling	Gil Hodges Lanes Brooklyn

State Games

Oct. 5-7	Fall Games	Saugerties
Nov. 3	Bowling West	AMF Olympic Lanes Rochester
Nov. 10	Bowling Central	Utica
Nov. 10	Bowling East	AMF Melville Bowl Melville

Where are we going?

Neal J. Johnson addresses the status of regionalization.

Editor's Note: In December 1999, the Special Olympics New York Board of Directors accepted a recommendation by the Organizational Review Task Force to explore the feasibility of restructuring the organization into regions. The Senior Management Team has since been charged with devising a plan to move into a regional configuration. The following Q&A with Neal J. Johnson, president and chief executive officer, addresses key issues from employees and volunteers in the field.



Neal J. Johnson

Q. Why does the Board and the Task Force believe regionalization is necessary?

A. One of the conclusions of the Task Force was that

our current structure, and by that I mean 37 Areas offering vastly different programs inhibits our growth and precludes Special Olympics New York from offering a continuity of service. Because of how we're structured, we're not successfully recruiting and retaining our two most important constituents – athletes and volunteers.

Additionally, there are between 300,000 and 500,000 people with mental retardation living in New York state, depending on whose numbers you use. We've got to find a way to reach and include greater numbers of potential athletes.

Q. What will happen to the Area programs?

A. Special Olympics will always be a community-based, grassroots program and the need for volunteers at all levels will never change. That is an absolute. It is not clear whether Area X will still be Area X, but the Area programs will certainly become part of

something larger – a regional program. A regional manager will be responsible and accountable for doing all the things that the organization wants to do – increase athlete and volunteer participation and offer our athletes a consistent training and competition program, no matter where they live.

Q. Why haven't there been specific details released regarding the state of the regionalization effort?

A. The staff has been meeting regularly in an effort to develop what a particular region would look like. This

Q&A is our attempt to share where we are in the process and how the eventual changes will impact our volunteers and our overall organization. We have defined the specific functions of the regions as they pertain to the entire organization. I feel very good about the work of our volunteer Organizational Review Task Force and the staff. Our goal is to communicate all details every step of the way.

Q. How far will athletes have to travel for a competition?

A. One of our objectives is to make travel easier for the greatest number of coaches, athletes and potential athletes within a region, and hopefully competitions will be within a two-hour drive for everyone. Our goal is to improve quality and access.

Q. What will become of existing volunteers who serve in key Area positions and will the responsibilities change?

A. The organization has always depended on volunteers to conduct the year-round training of athletes, and provide the expertise at local, sectional and state competitions. That will never change. So there will always be a role in Special Olympics for volunteers who devote their time to the athletes. The job of volunteers who have leadership roles in the Areas would likely change in a couple of ways. One of the goals is to create much less paperwork. Staff would handle most, if not all, of the administration



above the training club level. The other way the work will change is that Area leaders will be asked to think regionally and work with the regional offices to help accomplish the goals of regionalization.

Q. How will regionalization affect the athletes?

A. First of all, athletes would have access to more and better competitive and training experiences across the state. Every athlete, no matter where they live, should

have equal access to the same quality program. This will not only affect existing athletes, but a regional configuration will allow us to expand our outreach and improve the programs we offer with the addition of staff in the field whose responsibilities will focus on these goals.

Incremental changes, perhaps one or two test sites, could be implemented by the middle of 2002. We had discussed making a wholesale change into a regional configuration, but in studying reorganizations of other state programs, we've determined that gradual steps work best. When will it be fully complete? We look to continue implementation over the next two to three years.

Q. What's going to happen to my Area's funds?

A. I've heard this question a lot,

and I should point out that all finances belong to Special Olympics New York. I could sit here and say that Area programs have been allowed, over the years, to raise money on behalf of the athletes, just like SOI allows Special Olympics New York to raise money in New York. But that's not the position we want to take.

In fact, it's important to note that monies earmarked for specific activities within an area will remain there. The bottom line is that resources of Special Olympics New York will be used to improve training and competition programs for all existing

athletes, and serve to increase athlete and volunteer enrollment.

Q. Will Areas have to share financial resources?

A. The short answer to that is yes. Our goal again is to provide equity across the regions and across the state. Accomplishing that will require revenue sharing. The specific formulas for such revenue sharing have not been discussed in detail, but it became obvious from the work of the Task Force that certain Areas as they exist today do not have the same corporate centers that other Areas enjoy. Remember, our goal is to raise the standards for everyone.

Q. How will we raise funds?

A. Each region will be responsible for raising money within a statewide concept. Fund-raising volunteers will still be needed, even though it is likely that each region will have a person responsible for working with existing sponsors and donors and identifying new sources of revenue. We will certainly be calling upon volunteers, as we always have, to develop new initiatives and support existing ones. We are asking people to look at the big picture and look at the goals of the regionalization process. ■

THE GOAL OF REGIONALIZATION

To provide Special Olympics New York athletes with a consistent, high-quality sports training and competition program, regardless of where in New York they live, while increasing the number of athletes who are served.



Special Olympics
New York