

Triumph



Special Olympics New York • JANUARY 2002

Athletes Carry Olympic Flame Through NY

They join honorees escorting the flame to Salt Lake City.

Three Special Olympics New York athletes had the honor of carrying the Olympic Torch as it made its way through the state *en route* to the Winter Games in Salt Lake City.

Tory Fiorenza, 35, from Nassau County, ran with the Torch in the Bronx on Dec. 26. As his entourage of family and “fans”, who made the trip from Long Island, looked on, Fiorenza ran down Melrose Avenue between 163rd and 161st streets.

“It was cool,” said Fiorenza. “I had a great time and I was very proud.”



Joe Gould, 17, a bowler from Binghamton, made a trip to Syracuse to participate in the Torch Relay on Dec. 30. The Torch was attached to Gould’s wheelchair as he made his way along State Street. His parents and coaches cheered on the former Area 14 Athlete of the Year during his dramatic leg.

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Lynn Fiorenza

Nassau athlete Tory Fiorenza raises his arms in triumph after completing his leg of the Torch Relay.

Special Olympics New York Returns to Syracuse for 2002 Winter Games

City welcomes back Games for second year as nearly 650 are set to compete.

Special Olympics New York will return to the city of Syracuse for the 2002 Winter Games, Feb. 15 to 17. This is the second straight year the Winter Games have been held in the city.

Nearly 850 athletes and coaches will participate in six sports, including Figure and Speed Skating at the War Memorial at Oncenter, Floor Hockey and Floor Hockey Skills at the Oncenter, Alpine

Skiing at Toggenburg Mountain Winter Sports Center and Nordic Skiing at Beaver

Lake Nature Center.

“We are very happy to be returning to Syracuse and I would like to welcome the people of Central New York to volunteer, sponsor our athletes or simply come out and cheer them on to victory,” said Neal J.

Johnson, president and chief executive

officer of Special Olympics New York.

“Syracuse and Special Olympics have had an outstanding friendship over the years. We look forward to another great experience for our athletes.”

A volunteer Local Organizing Committee has been working for months with the goal of raising awareness, recruiting volunteers and securing sponsorships for the Winter Games. The Greater Syracuse Chamber of Commerce and the Syracuse Convention & Visitors Bureau have

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SONY Staff

Diane Budnar receives congratulations following a race last year.

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Get up-to-date information on our official Web site, www.specialolympicsnewyork.org.

A Message from the President

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



The Year 2002 will be one of monumental change at Special Olympics New York. It will also be a year that we need to recommit to certain fundamentals in the movement. Let me explain.

First, the major changes: The process of restructuring the organization

will begin in the summer when Nassau and Suffolk counties merge as a single Region under the Special Olympics New York umbrella. This pilot Region will provide us with feedback regarding organizational efficiencies, and become the template for success as we turn our restructuring efforts to the remainder of the state.

The mission of regionalization, again, is to provide athletes with a consistent, high-quality sports training and competition program, regardless of where they live, while increasing the number of athletes we serve.

The success of this mission can be measured in many ways, which returns us to the idea of concentrating on certain fundamentals. Perhaps the most important program statistic might well be the numbers of quality competitive experiences we offer to our athletes. Special Olympics was founded so that people with mental retardation could have an opportunity to compete in sports, not just participate in training clubs. Special Olympics has always been about helping athletes develop their skills and then giving them the venue to showcase those skills in competition.

It's true there are many functions that form the foundation of a successful Special Olympics program. We have to raise money, spread the word, and recruit and retain volunteers. The list goes on and on.

But the ultimate objective should be to provide quality competitive experiences. Around the state, volunteers are finding creative ways to increase the numbers of competitive experiences offered and, more importantly, they are doing it for greater numbers of athletes. Competitions such as the basketball invitational created last year by Kathi Nolan and Ed Doyle in Dutchess County enable more athletes to compete. In 2001, there were a total of 21 invitational tournaments held across the state, which is an increase of three over the previous year.

In Rockland County, Special Olympics leagues have long existed in Soccer, Softball, Basketball and Floor Hockey. In the Westchester/Putnam program, high school Special Olympics athletes in the Pioneer League can earn letters in Basketball and Volleyball.

As we begin to move through our restructuring process, let's remember these creative examples and the countless others, and keep in mind the fundamentals of Special Olympics: Athletes deserve to train, and they deserve to compete. ■

2002 Calendar of Events

January

- 1 New Year's Day holiday, SONY offices closed
- 11 Executive Committee of the Board of Directors meeting, NYSUT offices, Albany
- 12 Section 1 Floor Hockey, Jacob Javits Convention Center, New York City
- 21 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day holiday, SONY offices closed

Also scheduled during January, with dates to be confirmed:

- Training schools – Scheduled as needed throughout the year *



Special Olympics
New York

February

- 2 Section 2 Floor Hockey, Montrose
- 2 Sections 1, 2 & 3 Winter Games, West Mountain and Saratoga Spa State Park, Saratoga Springs
- 9 Sections 4 & 5 Floor Hockey, New York Chiropractic College, Seneca Falls
- 10 LETR Polar Plunge I, Rochester
- 15-17 2002 Winter Games, Syracuse
- 17 Board of Directors meeting, Wyndham Hotel, Syracuse, 9 a.m. to noon
- 18 President's Day holiday, SONY offices closed
- 21-23 USLC/SOI business meetings, Harrah's, Las Vegas, Nevada

Also scheduled during February, with dates to be confirmed:

- Cops & Lobsters, statewide *
- Training schools – Scheduled as needed throughout the year *

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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Special Olympics New York to Begin Restructuring in 2002

Long Island will become a pilot Region this summer.

A model for the future of Special Olympics New York will be unveiled in 2002, when Long Island becomes the pilot site for an aggressive, statewide restructuring.

The Special Olympics New York Long Island Region, as it will be called, is expected to open for business in the summer with a dedicated staff of management, competition, fund-raising and administrative professionals, who will work closely with volunteers to advance the mission of Special Olympics on Long Island and throughout New York.

The opening of the Long Island Region will be the first of at least nine Regions to open over the next two to three years, and is part of an overall restructuring plan to improve training and competition programs throughout the state and introduce Special Olympics to more athletes, volunteers and supporters, including sponsors.

The concept of restructuring was advanced by an *ad hoc* committee of the Board of Directors. The committee determined that the best way to meet the needs of the athletes would be to restructure the 37 Area programs into Regions.

"Special Olympics New York has been trying to grapple with inconsistencies in Program, Development and management for many years," said Neal J. Johnson, president and chief executive officer. "By moving staff into the communities where our mission is carried out, and by renewing our commitment to improve the consistency and quality of our training and competition programs, today's athletes and our future athletes can look forward to a Special Olympics program equal to any other in the world."

A regional structure will differ from the existing sectional configuration in that more staff will be dedicated to improving the core organizational functions in the field. In other words, a regional manager will oversee all training and competition, fund-raising, public awareness and athlete recruitment and retention, while supervising staff and

overseeing a network of regional committees. Regional managers will report to the central office.

"Across the country, nonprofit and for-profit businesses are restructuring in similar ways to create efficiencies and economies of scale in an effort to improve their products for their customers," said Johnson, who noted that Special Olympics Inc. (SOI) last year restructured the worldwide program into regions. "In our case, our product is our program and our customers are our athletes, volunteers and sponsors. We owe it to the athletes to anticipate our future challenges and make strides today to meet them."

The transformation of Long Island's two Area programs – Nassau and Suffolk

counties – into a single Region will begin in the spring, when the framework for a Regional Committee and several sub-committees is

created. Each sub-committee, which will address specific needs of the Region, will have representation on the Regional Committee. All committees will be made up of volunteers.

"One of the absolutes in Special Olympics is that volunteers will always be central to the success of the program," Johnson said. "Quite frankly, without volunteers there is no Special Olympics."

The organizational restructuring will continue through 2003 and, very likely 2004. It has not been determined which portion of the state will follow Long Island into regionalization.

In addition to SOI, the concept of regionalization has become popular across the country. Already, Illinois, California, Connecticut, Texas and Washington have regionalized. According to managers in these state programs, the transformation has resulted in more statewide fund-raising and awareness campaigns, better communications, more efficient and thorough volunteer recruitment and improved recruitment, retention and training of athletes.

Read more about our restructuring at www.specialolympicsnewyork.org. ■

We owe it to the athletes to anticipate our future challenges and make strides today to meet them.

-- Neal J. Johnson

Remembering Dick Schaap:

A friend of Special Olympics New York, dead at 67.

Special Olympics New York has unexpectedly lost one of its best celebrity supporters. Dick Schaap, noted sports writer and radio and television host, died Dec. 21 from complications following hip surgery. He was 67.

Schaap, a native New Yorker, gave his time to the Bronx program and participated in statewide fund-raisers including the Celebrity Golf Classic. He was the honorary chairman of the Bronx 25th anniversary dinner and dance last year and often hosted their sports auctions to help raise funds. "He was always there when we called him," said Phyllis Silverman, Bronx Area coordinator. "He will be missed." ■



MAAC Support Continues

The Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference held its annual basketball Media Day luncheon on Dec. 6.

Brooklyn athlete Rodney Hankins, shown with MAAC Commissioner Richard Ensor, Esq.,

spoke to the coaches and team representatives of all 10 conference schools. The MAAC's partnership with Special Olympics has included hosting invitationals, providing signage and public address scripts at games, airing radio and television public service announcements, and allowing athlete demonstrations at MAAC games. These initiatives take place throughout the year. ■



SONY Staff

Hey, Polar Plungers: C'mon in, the Water's Freezing

Two upstate plunges on tap for 2002.

There aren't many things less appealing than stripping down to your skivvies and jumping into a frigid lake. Then again, if the water was warm, it wouldn't be much of a fund-raiser.

Law enforcement officers from Monroe and Dutchess counties are putting the final details together for two separate Polar Plunges to be held this winter to raise awareness and funds

for the athletes of Special Olympics New York.



A chilling scene from last year's Polar Plunge in Fishkill.

File photo

The first plunge is scheduled to take place Feb. 10 in Rochester and the second is March 10 in Fishkill.

Both plunges, which are now held annually, are part of the Law Enforcement Torch Run to Benefit Special Olympics New York – a



year-round series of activities designed to call attention to the mission of Special Olympics.

“Polar Plunges have become the extreme sport for couch potatoes,” said Sgt. Sal Gerbino, Gates Police and organizer of the Rochester plunge. “You don't have to be an athlete to participate.”

Gerbino said that they have even established a new Polar Plunge motto for this year, inspired by something printed on the back of a 10-year-old plunger last year: “What, am I nuts?”

For more information, to plunge, or to sponsor a plunger, call Jeanne Mesick at 800-836-6976, or visit www.specialolympicsnewyork.org.

The Olympic Flame

Continued from p. 1

Also running in her hometown of Syracuse on Dec. 30 was Megan Brazell, 17. Brazell, a high school varsity swimmer, Special Olympics bowler and member of the

Onondaga County Softball team, was nominated for the relay by her parents. She made her journey down Thompson Road between Kirkville Road and James Street last as long as possible, walking most of her leg before passing the flame off to the next person.

“The flame jumped right out of mine and into hers,” Brazell said.

She also had a large contingent come out and watch her. Nearly 100 friends, family members, girl scout troops and members of the community came out in support.

Jeff Blatnick, the Special Olympics New York honorary coach, was selected to carry the Olympic Flame in Buffalo on New Year's Eve. Blatnick, who earned a gold medal in Greco Roman Wrestling at the 1984 Summer Games in Los Angeles, has been a champion for Special Olympics, as well as an inspiration to our athletes for the past decade.

The Olympic Flame was lit in Greece earlier in the year and arrived in Atlanta Dec. 4. In total, 11,500 people will carry the flame 13,500 miles. The journey will end Feb. 8 in Salt Lake City.

Visit specialolympicsnewyork.org for more photographs of the athletes and their historic run.



Provided by Lisa Van Alstyne

Beth Van Osten



Megan Brazell was all smiles as she made her way down Thompson Road with the Torch.

Joe Gould posed with coach Jeanne Finn and coach Beth Van Osten (above) and then proceeded through downtown Syracuse with the Flame burning bright.

Bocce Rolls Onto the Scene in 2002

Lifestyle sport gains popularity among athletes – young and old.

Bocce is a sport rich in history that's beginnings may go back to the Roman Empire. So it was appropriate that the Dec. 15 Bocce tournament was held in Rome – New York, of course. Nearly 70 athletes participated that day in a sport that is quickly gaining popularity throughout Special Olympics New York.

"Bocce is considered a lifestyle sport like golf," said Walter Kopzcuk, vice president of program for Special Olympics New York. "We thought Bocce would provide a great opportunity for our aging athlete population to continue to participate in our program. What we didn't expect was that it would take off and become popular with both young and old athletes."

For those not familiar, Bocce is a game of skill in which the object of the game is to roll the bocce, a 4 1/2 inch ball weighing three pounds, as close as possible to the pallino, a 1 3/4 inch ball which is rolled down the alley (or court) first. The bocce coming closest to the pallino scores.

While there is no definitive answer as to when or where Bocce came into being, some believe it dates back to the ancient Egyptians of 5200 BC. But others say it was the early Romans who were among the first

to play. Wherever it started, it grew throughout the centuries to become one of Europe's most popular pastimes. Early 20th century immigrants came to America, and played the game as a way to retain something from their homeland and began to organize Bocce leagues. Today, Bocce is the second most participated sport in the world, behind soccer.

Special Olympics, Inc. introduced

Bocce at the 1991 World Games. At the 1999 World Games, nearly 200 athletes from 33 countries participated.

In the last few years, athletes

in New York have begun to train and compete in Bocce. Director of Field Services Bob Turner approached friend John Bonacci, an avid Bocce player, who designed a Special Olympics training program with the help of Emilio Monti, of the local Italian American Community Center (IACC). This past year IACC members led that program at the IACC Bocce Pavilion.

In addition to training, local competitions like the one in Rome have been taking place and the addition of the sport to Sectionals isn't far behind. In fact, Bocce



Bob Marsocci coaches athlete David Pillig on the finer points of Bocce at the Italian American Community Center in Gates.

Carl Eilenberg



Carl Eilenberg

Alicia Lynch from Rome prepares to roll her bocce ball at the Dec. 15 Bocce Tournament.

will make its state competition premiere at the 2002 Summer Games in Buffalo.

"We would like for our athletes to qualify in Bocce for the 2003 World Games in Dublin," said Peter Lawrence, director of competition for Special Olympics New York. "In order to do that they need to compete in Buffalo. But after this year, Bocce will become a regular fixture at the state Fall Games."

The rules of Bocce are available at www.specialolympicsnewyork.org. (Look under Coaches Corner.) You can also find more information on the sport at www.bocce.com or www.worldbocce.org.



SONY Staff

And the Winner Is ...

Latest Harley Winner announced.

The second annual Law Enforcement Torch Run Harley-Davidson Raffle winner was Anthony Eaton of Scotia. Eaton and his wife Michelle chose the \$15,000 cash option and are shown here receiving their winnings at the Special Olympics New York Schenectady office. The couple had differing opinions on how the money would be used, but they agreed on a common home improvement theme. ■

Around the State

Area 4 – Rockland County

On Nov. 27, the 11th seasonal dinner of the North Rockland Soccer Association paid tribute to the more than 100 Special Olympics athletes, eight agencies, and volunteer coaches of the Special Olympics Soccer Association. Steven Stewart and Charlie Lucas also received Athletes of the Year honors from Fran Nardi and Steve Marcus of the North Rockland Soccer Association.



Area 12 – Oneida & Herkimer Counties

At a charity horse show at Fairway Farms in Westmoreland, Oneida County Sons of the American Legion presented Area 12 with a donation from fund-raisers, including pancake breakfasts, chicken barbecues, donation jars and a co-sponsored charity horse show, to name just a few. The generous donation of \$12,000 was accepted by athletes John Gurley, Paul Amoroso and Kim Kinsey at a special ceremony.

Area 15 – Chemung, Schuyler & Steuben Counties

On Friday, Nov. 2, eight teams participated at Area 15's third annual Soccer Fest in Bath. Approximately 70 athletes attended from Hornell, Bath, and Corning. All athletes received shin guards from the Area and volunteer help was provided by the Bath girl's varsity soccer team. Lunch was donated and served by the Hornell Moose Lodge.

Area 16 – Onondaga County

Two basketball teams from Onondaga County were invited to play an exhibition basketball game at LeMoyne College on Jan. 12. The athletes were very excited to show off their skills and meet the members of the women's and men's basketball teams.

Area 20 – Monroe County

Monroe County held its 12th annual Gymnastics meet on Dec. 16 at the the Gymnastics Training Center of Rochester. Nearly 60 athletes competed, representing Greece Athena Middle School, Gymnastics Training Center of Rochester, the School of the Holy Childhood and Northern Lights-Heritage Christian Home.

Please call, fax or e-mail your Area information to Doreen Hand, 212-661-3963, Fax: 212-661-4658, dhand@nyso.org

In the Next Issue

- Spring Sectional Schedule
- SO Get Into It Campaign Begins
- Cingular Promotion Results



Shop for Procter & Gamble Products in January

New York supermarkets participate in effort to support Special Olympics New York.

Write up those shopping lists. Procter & Gamble (P&G) has announced its annual "Inspire Greatness" campaign for January. The national promotion has a goal to generate more than \$5.5 million for Special Olympics programs across the United States, as well as educating consumers about the mission of Special Olympics.

For every participating P&G product purchased, Special Olympics will receive 10 cents from P&G (up to \$750,000 nationally). More than 55 million coupons were distributed in the Sunday newspaper on Dec. 30. Supermarkets such as Price Chopper and P&C Foods will advertise the promotion throughout their stores.

Additionally, P&G will match funds raised by local retailers. Syracuse-based P&C Foods, a Winter Games sponsor, plans to raise funds for Special Olympics New York by offering customers the opportunity to add a \$1 donation to their total purchase. Funds raised by local stores and a majority

of the matched funds remain in the state where they are raised.

"With the support of our local sponsors like P&C Foods and Price Chopper, and with the help of the local community, Special Olympics New York has an

opportunity to benefit greatly from this campaign," said Neal J. Johnson, president and chief executive officer of Special Olympics New York.

Look for the "Inspire Greatness" Special Olympics message on each P&G product shelf throughout January. The more products purchased, the more Special Olympics New York will benefit. Plus, Special Olympics can reap additional funds based on increasing sales versus last year's promotion.

Jim O'Connell, P&G's manager of corporate events, said the promotion has made good business sense for P&G and its customers. "More importantly," noted O'Connell, "our relationship with Special Olympics has enhanced the lives of more and more inspiring athletes." ■



Procter & Gamble

2002 Winter Games

Continued from P. 1

provided valuable support in this effort. The games are also part of the annual Winterfest, a 10-day downtown celebration filled with activities for families.

"The community was genuinely amazed and moved last year by the enthusiasm and skill of the Special Olympics athletes," said Jan Quitzau, executive director of the Syracuse Convention & Visitors Bureau. "Syracuse is honored to welcome back these great athletes, and we want to encourage our residents and businesses to become involved."

The games begin 8 p.m., Friday, Feb. 15, at Oncenter with Opening Ceremonies, which will feature entertainment, the Parade of Athletes and the lighting of the Olympic Cauldron.

For more information about the games, call 800-836-6976 or visit www.specialolympicsnewyork.org. For information about Winterfest, visit www.syracusewinterfest.com. ■

Schedule of Events

Friday, Feb. 15

- 1 - 4 p.m. Athlete Registration
Hotel Syracuse
- 6 - 7:30 p.m. Families Tailgate Party
Oncenter
- 8 - 9 p.m. **OPENING CEREMONIES**
Oncenter

Saturday, Feb. 16

- 8:30 a.m. - 2 p.m. **Volunteer Check-In at Venues**
- 9 a.m. - 6 p.m. **COMPETITION**
- 10 a.m. **Alpine**
Toggenburg Mountain
- 10 a.m. **Figure Skating**
War Memorial at Oncenter
- 9 a.m. **Floor Hockey Team**
Oncenter
- 9:30 a.m. **Floor Hockey Skills**
Oncenter
- 9:00 a.m. **Nordic**
Beaver Lake Nature Center
- 10:00 a.m. **Speed Skating**
War Memorial at Oncenter
- 10 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. **Olympic Village**
Oncenter
- 7:30 - 9:30 p.m. **Victory Dance/
Closing Ceremonies**
Oncenter

Our Winter Sponsors

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Letters

Editors Note: The following letter was written to Holly Gray of Special Olympics New York. Gray was a Global Messenger mentor to Stephen Caruso.

Dear Holly:

I would like to thank you so very, very much for taking the time to go with me to the Special Olympics Fall Conference. I would also like to thank you so very much for working with me on how to be a Global Messenger. I had a wonderful time. And thank you so much for dancing with me at the awards banquet. You are such a great dancer.

Well, thank you again so very much for a wonderful time. Most of all, thank you for being so special to me.

From your special friend,
Steve Caruso

A Special Invitation

Dear Parents and Families of Special Olympics Athletes:

With Special Olympics New York's Winter Games coming up on February 15-17, I would like to cordially invite you to come to Syracuse to see your athlete compete.

A great way to start off your weekend in Syracuse is to attend the Tailgate Party. It is scheduled for 6-7:30 p.m. Friday, February 15, at the Oncenter. You do not have to bring anything. Just come, eat and meet other parents from around the state. Opening Ceremonies takes place at the same place following the party.

The Tailgate Party is a great way to relax after your ride to Syracuse and get fueled up before the spectacular Opening Ceremonies. I'm looking forward to meeting you there.

Peggy O'Hara,
Area Coordinator,
Onondaga County



Submit letters to Doreen Hand, Special Olympics New York, 211 East 43rd Street, 12th Floor New York, NY 10017, e-mail: dhand@nyso.org.



Special Olympics
New York

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State Staff Changes

- ▶ Linda Greenwald has resigned as director of Development in the New York City office.
- ▶ Charlene Rickson has been promoted to the position of direct marketing database manager, effective Jan. 1.
- ▶ Rebekah Mount has joined the staff as administrative assistant, Development, in the Schenectady office.
- ▶ Nichole Geracitano, has been hired as director of Development in the Schenectady office. Her duties will include Satins, Silks & Stars, sponsorship sales and donor development. Her official start date was Jan. 14. ■

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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.