

Volunteers Make Winter Games a Success

Continued from P. 1

skills); Figure Skating; Snowshoeing; and Speed Skating. Olympic-style rules applied.

Brooklyn Floor Hockey player Rodney Hankins had nothing but kind words for Ellenville: "Ellenville has been great to us. I'm so glad the volunteers came out to help. We couldn't do it without their help."

"We're thrilled with the support we've received in Ellenville, and it all starts with the volunteers," Johnson said. "For example, Ellenville High School's students have been wonderful. There were more than 100 students involved, and they greeted our athletes when they got off their buses at the Nevele on Friday. They acted as ambassadors all day, and quite a few of them came back Saturday to help out at the competition venues. That kind of volunteerism not only adds to the quality of the Winter Games – it makes the event possible."

The Winter Games were sponsored by: New York Lottery (statewide sponsor); NYSUT (statewide sponsor); Provident Bank (lead sponsor); HealthNow; Hydro Aluminum; Kaz, Inc.; and ClearChannel Radio of the Hudson Valley (media sponsor). ■ JF

SPECIAL OLYMPICS NEW YORK WINTER GAMES NEVELE-ELLENVILLE 2003-2004



A group of Floor Hockey officials, including SONY President and Chief Executive Officer Neal J. Johnson (second from right) take a break at SONY's 2004 Winter Games. ■ JF

New Gear Leads To New Attitude For Ulster Tigers

As soon as the Ulster Tigers put on their new gear, it was obvious that the Floor Hockey team was ready for Special Olympics New York's 2004 Winter Games.

"They put the equipment on and they got aggressive in their play," said Gary J. Terwilliger, who runs SONY's Ulster County and who helps coach the Tigers.

The team's new equipment, which it received late in 2003, was funded partially through the Delisio Memorial Golf Tournament and a donation from Horseshows in the Sun.

"They're like a band of thieves this year," Terwilliger said. "It's so thrilling to watch them perform."

According to SONY athlete Joe Gippert, the new equipment is at least part of the mix that helped the squad capture a

gold medal at a recent Sectional competition.



A member of the Ulster Tigers, in red, battles for the puck during a Floor Hockey contest at SONY's 2004 Winter Games. ■ JF

"If we have the right equipment, it's better and safer," said Gippert, 30. "And if you don't have the right equipment, you're going to get hurt."

The team, which consists of male and female athletes between the ages of 15 and 50, has practiced together weekly for the last month.

"We'd like to win a gold medal at the Winter Games," Gippert said. "But that's not the most important thing. The most important thing is just to do the best you can."

The Ulster Tigers finished fourth in the Floor Hockey competition at Special Olympics New York's 2004 Winter Games.

■ JF

He'll Hear The Crowd Cheering

Floor Hockey athlete Bryan Johnston had a break before his team's gold medal game at Special Olympics New York's 2004 Winter Games on Saturday, and he decided to spend his free time at Healthy Hearing in Olympic Village.

"It sounded like fun," said Johnston, who hails from Jamestown.

Dr. Judy Gravel and her crew, which included Audiology students from Hunter College, tested Johnston.

"We see more hearing problems than we'd like to," said Dr. Gravel, who is a professor of Audiology at Hunter College.

"But this is what drives Healthy Hearing:



Dr. Judy Gravel runs a hearing test on SONY athlete Bryan Johnston as part of the Healthy Hearing initiative, which took place in Olympic Village at SONY's 2004 Winter Games. ■ JF

Cold Weather Training Pays Off For Genesee Region Skiers

For the Nordic Skiers from Special Olympics New York's Genesee Region, the 35-degree weather Saturday at SONY's 2004 Winter Games must have felt like a heat wave. The seven-person squad began preparing for the Winter Games in early January, and they dealt with some difficult weather at Swain Ski Center, where they trained weekly regardless of the conditions.

"It was freezing," coach Shannon Smith said. "It was terrible."

But the training proved invaluable; it provided Smith's athletes – the team consisted of Kimberly Adams, Aaron Barton, Delilah Burns, Jason Crane, Howard Dould, Dana French and Catherine Hurd – with an opportunity to learn an important lesson: "I thought I was going to fall, and I did," Burns said. "But if we fall, we have to get ourselves up. That's how we learn to do it."

Perhaps just as importantly, they bonded as a team.

"We've been having fun," Hurd said. "We get to meet new people and we've got a great coach."

"Even with the cold weather, it's been absolutely wonderful," Smith said. "The athletes have such a wonderful attitude that it rubs off on you."

The Genesee Region team finished fourth in the Nordic 4 X 1 Relay at Special Olympics New York's 2004 Winter Games.

■ JF



Athletes and coaches from SONY's Genesee Region pose before competing in Nordic Skiing events at SONY's 2004 Winter Games. Genesee Region coach Shannon Smith is in the center, in a white coat, and Genesee Region Executive Director Dave McEneaney is second from the right. ■ JF

Volunteer Lends Pipes To Winter Games

Bill O'Donnell's volunteer contribution echoed throughout the mountains surrounding the Nevele Grande Resort & Hotel at Special Olympics New York's 2004 Winter Games.

"Kicking out of the gates ..." boomed O'Donnell's smooth voice into a microphone, telling the crowd about each of SONY's Alpine Skiers as they started down the ski slope. For every athlete, he added their hometown and a few interesting facts, such as their favorite places to ski.

"We thought Bill would be great for announcements," said Mark Beck, who runs the ski slope at the Nevele and who recruited volunteers to help at the Winter Games. "And he's doing a great job."

"As a volunteer, you show up and go wherever you're needed," O'Donnell said. "This is fun."

O'Donnell, who also does the stadium announcing for Ellenville High School's football games, first got involved with SONY about four years ago, when a SONY event was held at Ellenville Middle School, where O'Donnell was Food Services Director. He now teaches fifth- and sixth-grade English at the school, but he has continued to volunteer.

"It's so nice to see Special Olympics athletes compete just for the sake of competing, and just to do the best they can," O'Donnell said. ■ JF



Volunteer Bill O'Donnell lent his voice to the Alpine Skiing event at SONY's 2004 Winter Games. ■ JF