

Triumph



Special Olympics New York • APRIL 2002

Healthy Mind, Healthy Body, Healthy Athletes

Innovative screening program will expand again in 2002.

Gloria Simpson had been complaining of eye pain. Nick Derouaux wanted a dentist to examine his teeth.

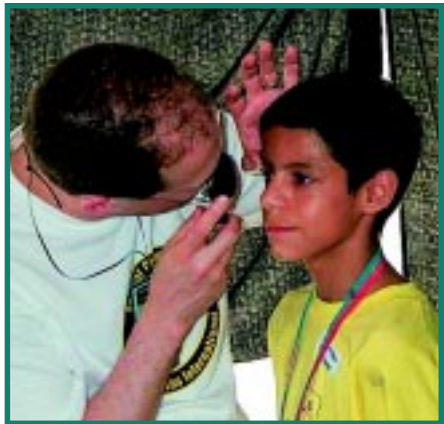
Alicia Zeitz was having difficulty seeing with her new prescription glasses.

Thanks to the Healthy Athletes program, which provides athletes with vision, hearing and dental screenings at events, Simpson was referred to a specialist, Derouaux was told he needed a thorough dental exam, and Zeitz walked away with a new prescription for glasses.

In 2001, the Special Olympics New York Healthy Athletes program provided important medical screenings to hundreds of athletes, thanks to a grant from the New York State Department of Health and the commitment of nearly 200 physicians from across the state. In 2002, the service will be added to more Area and Sectional competitions as a way of teaching more athletes about the importance of good health. As many as 5,000 athletes will be offered medical screening this year.

“Special Olympics is in no way trying

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SONY Staff

Vision screening is one of the services offered through Healthy Athletes.

On Top of the World

Brooklyn's Rodney Hankins says he's ready for his duties as an International Global Messenger.

Rodney Hankins has completed his training as a Sargent Shriver International Global Messenger and is ready to help spread the message of Special Olympics throughout the world.

Of course, if you know Hankins, you know he's always seemed ready for such a role.

“I just hope I can make an impact with the athletes,” said Hankins, who this year became the first New York athlete to be selected as an International Global Messenger.

Hankins is one of 12 athletes from as far away as Russia, India and Lebanon who took part in a three-day Global Messenger training session in Los Angeles in March. Their crash course was capped off with VIP treatment at the world premiere re-release of “ET – The Extra Terrestrial,” where they mingled with celebrities and were intro-

duced to throngs of media members and a movie audience of 3,000 people.

Hankins had his picture taken with “Ali” star Will Smith and “ET” Director Steven Spielberg. He and his fellow Global Messengers strolled the red carpet with the movie's original cast, including Drew Barrymore.

“I didn't want to leave,” said Hankins, who has visited the West Coast many times and was eager to give a tour to his new friends. “There was a lot of stuff that I didn't get to show them, like the Star Search Theater, the Hollywood homes and Beverly Hills. But I had a ball. I'm really looking forward to working with all the other Global Messengers.”

International Global Messengers are selected every two years by Washington,



Starlight Photography

Rodney Hankins and Steven Spielberg.

D.C.-based Special Olympics, Inc. (SOI). They serve as ambassadors of the movement, attending conferences, special events and competitions around the world. Global Messengers have met world leaders, dined at the White House and addressed the European Union. They have toured China and South Africa as part of a mission to introduce Special Olympics to these and

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Find 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.



There have been many milestones and important occurrences that have happened throughout the three decades of Special Olympics New York history. Most of those significant events have been pleasant and we take great joy in

sharing them with all of you.

However, at times, we need to share some things that sadden all of us, yet because of their significance, deserve to be reported as well. Since our last issue, we have been informed of the passing of two individuals who have done so much to bring us to where we are today. The first loss was Charlie Bryner, formerly of Special Olympics Chautauqua County, and more recently, Mary Beth Stray, former Area Coordinator of Special Olympics Brooklyn.

Though they served far away from each other at different ends of the state, their efforts made significant contributions to the lives of their athletes. Charlie and Helen Bryner were behind the scenes for every accomplishment achieved by their son Danny and his teammates on the Chautauqua Lakers. Whatever the sport, the Lakers were always ready to compete hard and fair and with total sportsmanship. Charlie always made sure the athletes were prepared mentally and physically to do their best. Win or lose, he made sure the athletes held their heads high and took pride in their accomplishments. It is no wonder that a few years ago our Board of Directors saw it fit to name our award for family of the year the "Bryner Family of the Year Award".

Beth Stray jumped into Special Olympics with both feet, bringing her incomparable sense of humor and enthusiasm. Beth was a staunch advocate of coaches training and certification, who also was not beyond making mischief at coaches training camps. If you wanted to be one of Beth's coaches, you had to be prepared to teach your athletes and to make sure you and the athletes had fun. There are many memorable stories of both Beth's commitment to her athletes and her zest for life.

On behalf of our entire organization, I send our sincerest sympathies to Helen and Danny Bryner, and to Beth's husband Billy for their losses. More importantly, we send our gratitude for having shared Charlie and Beth with all of us for so long. ■

2002 Calendar of Events

April

- Cops & Lobsters all month
- 7 NYSOPBA Run Through the Pines 5K, Satratoga Spa State Park, Saratoga Springs
- 13 Section 3 Aquatics/Basketball, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs
- 14 Section 1 & 2 Volleyball & Aquatics, St. Johns University, Queens, NY
- 19-26 15th Anniversary Special Olympics Greece Invitational, Athens
- 20 Section 1 Basketball/Aquatics, Fordham University, Bronx
- 20 Section 4 Aquatics/Basketball, SUNY at Oswego
- 21 Section 2 Basketball/Aquatics, Marist College, Poughkeepsie
- 24-27 NYSUT Convention, NY Hilton Hotel, Manhattan
- 27 Section 5 Basketball, New York Chiropractic College, Seneca Falls

Also scheduled during April, with dates to be confirmed:

- Area Coordinators' Council meeting *
- Training schools – Scheduled as needed throughout the year *

May

- 4 Section 5 Aquatics & Volleyball, Canisius College, Buffalo
- 6 Cops & Lobsters ends
- 7 LETR Golf Tournament, Nevele Grande, Ellenville
- 11 LETR Buffalo Fire Truck Pull
- 18 Section 2 Volleyball, Hommocks School, Mamaroneck

Also scheduled during May, with dates to be confirmed:

- LETR Plane Pull 1, Albany International Airport *
- Harley Davidson Raffle begins statewide 2002 Sportster*
- 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.

In the Next Issue

- Summer Games Preview
- Satins, Silks & Stars
- Greece Results



Triumph

Vol. 6, No. 4 April 2002

Triumph is published 12 times a year by the Public Relations Department for the athletes, volunteers, employees, Board members, Area programs, sponsors and donors of Special Olympics New York, Inc.

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Freezin' for a Reason

Polar bears take the plunge for Special Olympics.

When one thinks of taking a refreshing dip, the mind typically conjures a bright, sunny day on a white, sandy beach – not Lake Ontario or Lake Mariah in the dead of winter.

But that's where the "polar bears" were spotted in February and March, braving the icy waters of New York to raise money for the LETR to benefit Special Olympics New York.

Lake Ontario in Rochester was the setting Feb. 10, and the Sharpe Reservation in Fishkill hosted its own chilly affair March 10. More than 350 brave souls took the frosty dips. They came dressed in diapers and grass skirts with coconut tops. They arrived as clowns, bears, cupids, and even

Lady Liberty herself.

Over the past four years, hundreds of plungers have braved the frigid waters in an effort to raise money to support Special Olympics New York, which provides athletic training and competition for children and adults with mental retardation.

The dippy dippers ranged in age from 7 to 70-plus. Children came with jars of change they collected in their neighborhoods and court officers came with checks for thousands of dollars. Between the two plunges, more than \$40,000 was raised.

"This year's organizers, Sgt. Sal Gerbino of the Gates PD, and Officer Chris Hamel of the Town of Poughkeepsie PD, deserve an enormous amount of thanks,"



Judy McBride

The Fishkill plunge brought out the bold and the brave.

said Torch Run Liaison Jeanne Mesick, of Special Olympics New York. "Every year their plunges just keep getting better. More people show up, more money is raised, more awareness is created and each new plunge is better than the plunge in the year gone past." ■

Devil Dogs Drink in the Pespi Arena

MAAC fans cheer athletes during demonstration game.

Any butterflies that Dubois Hunt may have had before his team took the court at the Pepsi Arena quickly fluttered away as he sunk his first of four baskets in a five-minute exhibition game during the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference basketball championship weekend in March.

His scoring frenzy punctuated an exciting exhibition, played in front of several hundred fans during halftime of a men's game. The intersquad competition featured players from the Capital District Devil

Dogs training club, who excited the crowd with their competitive fire.

The game which was part of a weekend of Special Olympics promotional activities hosted by the MAAC. Through the MAAC's support, athletes also speak at other awards banquets, participate in television interviews and receive tickets to competitions throughout the year.

Greg Cowl, a Global Messenger from Latham, Albany County, was a guest speaker at the basketball banquet, attended

by 800 players, coaches, sponsors and MAAC officials.

"Everyone in this room knows what it's like to win and what it's like to lose," Cowl said. "For a moment, imagine what it would be like if you were not allowed to

play sports. That's what it was like for people like me before Special Olympics came along. "My dreams have come true because I am able to compete in sports," Cowl concluded. "I hope all your dreams come true, if not this weekend, then

sometime very soon."

For the past several years, the MAAC, under the leadership of Commissioner Richard Ensor, has partnered with Special Olympics New York in an effort to bring visibility to the mission. The partnership has now grown to include the participation of MAAC member schools, and has resulted in demonstrations and speaking opportunities during all levels of MAAC competitions. ■



SONY Staff

The Devil Dogs position themselves for a rebound at the demonstration game.

So Long, Marge

Special Olympics bids farewell to devoted employee.



SONY Staff

Marge Reynheer, a 19-year employee, retired from Special Olympics New York at the end of March.

Reynheer served as the executive secretary and worked with four presidents during her tenure.

"We're sorry to see Marge go," said Neal J. Johnson, president and Chief Executive Officer. "She spent nearly 20 years serving our athletes and we are very grateful for all of her efforts and her devotion to our cause. She'll be missed."

Reynheer and her husband Bill, who also is retired, plan on traveling and visiting with friends. ■

Athletes Have the Chance to Make a Difference

New York joins Palestinian and Israeli athletes at “Peace Games.”

Like the Olympics, Special Olympics games often host athletes from many nations who come together for a few days and leave their differences behind.

The invitational being held by Special Olympics Greece in celebration of its 15th anniversary, April 19 to 26, carries increased significance.

The games have been nicknamed the “Peace Games” because many of the countries participating have been touched by war. From Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, and most currently, Israel and Palestine, the athletes will come together in peace to share in the spirit of sportsmanship and friendship. New York was invited in light of the Sept. 11 attacks.

There will be a strong security presence on the cruise ships where the athletes will be housed and at the various

venues. The United States Ambassador to Greece, Thomas Miller, and his staff, will attend the Games and meet the New York delegation.

“I’m confident that we will be taken care of and be completely safe throughout the trip,” said Jeff Countois, head of delegation for the trip and director of field services, Section 2. “This will be a great opportunity for all of the athletes attending to have something to celebrate rather than worry about the conflicts back home.”

The competition and rivalries will only be on the playing field, and for a few days in April, Special Olympics athletes will show the world what it’s like to live together in peace.

For more information about the games, and results at their conclusion, visit www.specialolympicsnewyork.org. ■



15th Anniversary Celebration

Countries Participating in Greece Invitational

Greece	Israel
U.S.A. - New York	Lebanon
Cyprus	Palestine
Spain	Syria
Italy	Kuwait
San Marino	Saudi Arabia
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Egypt
Yugoslavia	Algeria
Croatia	Morocco
Macedonia	Tunisia
Romania	Turkey

Metro Tournament to Celebrate New York City

FDNY continues to be strong supporter of competition.

Athletes and coaches in the Metro area are preparing for New York City’s largest Special Olympics event of the year – Metro Tournament. Riverbank State Park in Harlem will play host for the seventh year to the six-sport competition on June 1.

Last year’s tournament was hampered by a rain that didn’t let up until early afternoon. But thanks to the Fire Department of New York, who vacuumed the water off the track, the athletes were able to compete in their events.

The FDNY is on board again this year. Many firefighters assist each year with equipment setup and takedown as well as other support during the event. They will also provide ceremonial aspects to the Opening Ceremonies including bagpipes, color guard and parade marshals.

“We don’t know how we can do this event without them,” said Melissa Gross, director of Program for Special Olympics New York and Metro Tournament organizer. “They are willing to do anything we ask of them and jump in whenever we need them.”

The organizing committee is working



Veronica Yankowski

Powerlifting is one of the most exciting venues during Metro Tournament.

to make this year’s Metro Tournament one of celebration and remembrance. A special presentation during Opening Ceremonies is also being planned.

“Many of the firemen who helped out at last year’s Metro lost their lives on 9/11,”

Gross said. “We want to make this year’s event great in tribute to them and to the rest of New York City.”

For more information on Metro Tournament call Gross at 212-661-3963 or visit www.specialolympicsnewyork.org. ■

Ducks Return to East River for Second Annual Race

Organizers hope that double the ducks equals double the bucks.

The ducks have returned from migration and will descend on the South Street Seaport in Manhattan for the Million Dollar Duck Race on June 19. The event raised more than \$100,000 for Special Olympics New York last year through duck adoptions.

It costs \$5 to adopt a racing duck. There are also two multi-duck packages available: the Quack Pack for \$25 and the Quacker's Dozen for \$50. With each package, the donor also gets their very own duck and complimentary gifts like a one-week pass to New York Sports Clubs, discounts from Cingular Wireless and coupons from the South Street Seaport.

The number of ducks anticipated this year has doubled to more than 20,000. That means more than 20,000 ducks will be dumped into the East River and race from just south of the Brooklyn Bridge to Pier 17 at the South Street Seaport.

Last year, half the adoptions were a result of the team adoption drive. Corporations, groups of friends, or families join a team online and invite others to participate through e-mail.

"Approximately 60 percent of adoptions were done online last year and that number is sure to increase this year," said Robert Blaustein, director of Development for Special Olympics New York and race organizer. "It's a fun and easy way for people to get involved with Special Olympics."

For those participating in the Team Adoption Duck Drive, the grand prize for the team which raises the most money is a "happy hour" party for your corporation or team at the Seaport.

Individual prizes include a two-year lease on a 2002 Honda Accord, wireless service and a phone from Cingular Wireless, a one-year membership to New York Sports Clubs and a \$1,000 savings bond from Astoria Federal Savings. These will be

awarded to the adopted "parents" of the ducks which cross the finish line first.

Where does the million dollars come in? One out of every 3,333 ducks in the race will be marked as a million dollar duck. If that duck crosses the finish line first, his "parent" wins 1 million.

Participants don't have to be at the Seaport for the race or even be in New York City. Anyone can adopt a duck and results will be posted online after the race.

If you're interested in adopting a duck or would like more information, visit specialolympicsnewyork.org or call the Adoption Hotline at 212-490-1062. Area programs can also profit by selling ducks on their own. Call Blaustein for details at 212-661-5217.



Dominick Totino Photography

Downtown New York provides a magnificent backdrop at the South Street Seaport.



Dominick Totino Photography

Last year, 10,000 ducks were dropped into the East River for the race. This year, 20,000 rubber duckies will race to the finish line.

Around the State

Areas 2 & 31 – Long Island

Sal Agonstinelli and Frank and Terri Cangiione, owners of the Long Island Baseball Academy in Smithtown, hosted a free “Spring Training” for Special Olympics athletes from Long Island. The athletes worked on their hitting and fielding and were then treated to a visit by former New York Yankee Rusty Torres.



Area 17 – Cayuga/Cortland/Tompkins

The Seneca Cayuga ARC will hold a Bowl-a-Thon at the Starlite Lanes in Auburn on April 28. Money raised will be used to offset the cost of transportation to Special Olympics Bowling practices.

Area 17 is planning its annual picnic for June 19 at Stewart Park. Hot dogs and beverages will be provided and the day will include bocce and volleyball games. Call 607-273-0566 for more information.

Area 20 – Monroe County

The 11th Annual Crystal Olympic Gala was held March 23 at the Hyatt Regency in Rochester. More than 600 were in attendance and the event raised \$90,000. Olympic gold medalist in beach volleyball, Dain Blanton was a special guest and gave the keynote address. Earlier in the day, Blanton hosted a volleyball clinic for local youth, proceeds of which also went to Monroe’s Special Olympics program.

Area 30 – Brooklyn

Brooklyn’s Spring Games will be held in memory of volunteer Suzanne Geraty. Involved as a volunteer and a 15-year employee for the Guild for Exceptional Children, Geraty was an employee of Cantor Fitzgerald in the World Trade Center and was lost on Sept. 11. Brooklyn’s Area Committee asked that we remember Geraty’s family and her extended family at the Guild in our prayers.

Area 31 – Suffolk County

Executive Director Jeff McCausland and Global Messenger Matthew Schuster met with United States Congressman Steve Israel about support for the Long Island Region. Israel pledged his support to the athletes of the Region.

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

Long Island Receives \$20,000 and a Pledge of Future Support From GEICO



Joint efforts produce corporate support for future Region.

GEICO Direct, the fifth-largest private passenger auto insurance company in the United States, has pledged its support to Long Island’s Special Olympics program in the form of \$10,000 each for the Spring Games in Nassau and Suffolk counties.

Jeff McCausland, executive director of Special Olympics New York – Suffolk County and Terry Uellendahl, Area coordinator for Nassau County, have met with GEICO executives, to discuss future financial and volunteer support.

“Bob Miller, the new northeast senior

vice president, has put together an outstanding team and they have all stepped up to the plate for Special Olympics,” said McCausland. “I foresee a mutually rewarding partnership with Geico Direct well into the future.”

GEICO has a reputation for being a good corporate citizen, supporting many charitable organizations such as the United Way and Mothers Against Drunk Driving. GEICO also encourage its associates to support charities with their time, efforts and donations. ■

Area Spring Games Provide Volunteer Opportunities

Local Special Olympics programs throughout the state are preparing for their busiest time of the year. Not only are their athletes training for Sectionals and Summer Games, but they are also planning their own Spring Games.

There are nearly 450 competitions across the state each year. The majority of these competitions take place at the local level and are run by volunteers. Spring Games are the largest of these competitions and are a large undertaking for local programs.

Spring Games vary from Area to Area. Some have hundreds of participants while others have thousands, like Suffolk County. Some just have Track & Field, while some

could have as many as six sports.

Many Areas attain top-notch facilities for their games. Queens is holding its at St. John’s University, while the Alley-Cats of Area 25 use St. Bonaventure. Orange County has been using the campus of West Point for years for its Spring Games.

One thing that remains the same across the board: no matter which county you’re in, it seems that Special Olympics is right around the corner. So go out there and volunteer at your local Spring Games.

Spring Games will be taking place throughout April and May. For a listing of Spring Games across the state, visit www.specialolympicsnewyork.org, or call the Program department at 518-388-0791. ■

Free Gym Memberships Available for New York Metro Programs.

New York Sports Clubs are offering Special Olympics New York athletes and coaches an opportunity to use their facilities to train for free. There are a number of clubs in New York City, Long Island and the lower Hudson Valley.

Many athletes from Staten Island, Brooklyn and Westchester are already taking advantage of this opportunity.

If you are interested in joining, there is a list of criteria for athletes and coaches online at www.specialolympicsnewyork.org.



For more information, please call Melissa Gross, director of program, at 212-661-3963. ■

Bowling Kicks Off Spring Sectional Season



Starlight Photography

More than 55 athletes and coaches took part in the Section 3 and 4 Bowling Tournament, March 9 at Clifton Park Bowl in Saratoga County. More Sectionals are planned throughout April, May and June. Visit www.specialolympicsnewyork.org for a full schedule of events. ■

Healthy Athletes

Continued from p. 1

to get into the health care business,” said Neal J. Johnson, president and chief executive officer of Special Olympics New York. “We have great health service right here in New York state, but the Healthy Athletes initiative can enhance what our athletes may or may not receive from their own doctors. The grant we receive from the state Health Department is vital to the present and ongoing success of the program.”

New York’s Healthy Athletes program began informally in the mid-1990s, when screenings were provided to athletes at downstate events. Healthy Athletes officially began in New York in 1999 with the launch of Special Smiles. Opening Eyes, a vision screening program, began in 2001. Healthy Hearing is slated to begin at this year’s Fall Games. All Healthy Athletes programs are made possible through the two-year, \$150,000 Health Department grant.

People with mental retardation and closely related developmental disabilities face various challenges in receiving health care. These individuals often have a greater number of health problems than the general public and there are certain health issues inherent to the population.

The objectives of Healthy Athletes is to improve access to health care for Special Olympic athletes, to train and educate health care professionals and students about the special needs of people with mental retardation and to raise general awareness of the health issues of Special Olympic athletes.

“As a long-time supporter of Special Olympics, I am pleased to announce second-year funding to this organization under New York’s Healthy Athletes Initiative,” said State Health Commissioner Antonia C. Novello, M.D., M.P.H., Dr.PH. “This program will ensure that the individuals participating in this year’s games have access to comprehensive vision, hearing and dental screening services. This funding will help benefit thousands of athletes and their families participating in various Special Olympics events statewide. Nothing inspires me more than to see these special athletes achieving many of their personal goals and aspirations through athletic competition, to see the individual smiles and to know that New York state continues to support initiatives aimed at improving the lives and health of these Special Olympics athletes and their families.” ■

Rodney Hankins

Continued from p. 1

other nations, and they have attended ceremonies in Greece to light the Special Olympics Flame of Hope. Attending the “ET” premiere was the first official duty of the new class.

Each athlete in the Class of 2002-'03 has selected a platform issue. Hankins, a fit Track & Field standout, will preach physical fitness and nutrition. “I’m really looking forward to working with the other Global Messengers,” he said. “I have a lot of ideas I want to share with people. For instance, I really think stretching and exercising is very important. You have to eat, drink, sleep and train in the right way.”

Except for the occasional cheesecake, Hankins has a fairly strict diet and a rigid exercise regimen, running and lifting weights several times a week. He has earned medals at all levels of Special Olympics competition, including Silvers and Golds at the 1995 and 1999 World Summer Games. He has participated in demonstrations at the 1996 Paralympic Trials and the 1998 Goodwill Games.

“It was very clear to me from the start

of our training that Rodney and all the other athletes really understood that we are asking them to help us change attitudes around the world,” said Dave Lenox, SOI’s director of athlete leadership programs. “There was an air of determination as they shared their experiences and contributed so much to the training. Like the International Global Messengers before them, I have no doubt that our new Global Messengers will have a positive impact wherever they go.”

Ephraim Mohlakane of South Africa, a Track & Field athlete who found a lot in common with Hankins, said he is ready for his duties.

“I am very happy to be here and when I go home to my country I am going to tell



Starlight Photography

The Global Messengers received a visit from Eunice Kennedy Shriver. Left to right: Maysaa Sandakly, Eunice Kennedy Shriver, Katie Wilson, Katie Meade, Rodney Hankins and Paul Marretti.

all people in my country that Special Olympics is very important,” said Mohlakane. “I want to make Special Olympics big, big, big.”

So does Hankins. But he has another concern, too.

“I just hope the next two years don’t go too fast,” he said. ■



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Special Olympics New York, Inc. is Authorized and Accredited by Special Olympics International for the Benefit of Citizens with Mental Retardation.

Thank You Volunteers!

The 29th Annual National Volunteer Week is April 21 to 27.

National Volunteer Week, April 21 to 27, is a time to recognize and celebrate the efforts of volunteers at the local, state and national levels. This year's National Volunteer Week theme is "Celebrate the American Spirit—VOLUNTEER!"

"For organizations like Special Olympics New York, which relies heavily on the support of volunteers, this is a great opportunity for us to extend our thanks," said Diana Bennett, director of volunteer management. "We wouldn't be successful at reaching as many athletes as we do or providing them with the quality training and competition that they receive without the

thousands of volunteers around the state who put in hours and hours of their time."



National Volunteer Week began in 1974 when President Richard Nixon signed an executive order establishing the week as an annual celebration of volunteering.

Every president since has signed a proclamation promoting National Volunteer Week.

If you're interested in getting involved, call Bennett at 800-836-6976 or visit www.specialolympicsnewyork.org for volunteer opportunities near you. ■

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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.