

Triumph



Special Olympics New York • JANUARY 2003

The Snowy Catskills are Prepared for the Return of the Winter Games

Stormy weather has created optimal conditions for Alpine and Nordic athletes.

If the weather holds out, Special Olympics won't have to break out the snow machines for the 2003 Winter Games, Feb. 21 to 23. And while shoveling has become a frequent hobby for Upstate New Yorkers, the athletes of Special Olympics New York have benefited from the great skiing conditions.

"So many times in the past we have had to resort to making snow for the Nordic athletes," said Pete Lawrence, director of competition for Special Olym-

pics New York. "This year we have had a mixed blessing in New York. You may not like so much snow, but our athletes have had a great opportunity to train. "I'm sure there will plenty of snow left on Feb. 21."

The Nevele Grande Resort & Country Club in

Ellenville will once again host the Winter Games. Having hosted the event five times before in the 1990s, the community is excited to see the athletes return.



"We're very eager to have the Winter Games return to the Nevele," said Debbie Briggs, longtime Special Olympics volunteer, Ellenville resident and member of the Winter Games Organizing Committee. "Our community can't wait to show their support and provide the athletes with a memorable experience."

In addition to Skiing, athletes will compete in Floor Hockey Team and Floor Hockey Skills, Figure Skating and Speed Skating. Opening and Closing Ceremonies, and all sports but Alpine Skiing, will take place at the Nevele. Alpine will take place at Holiday Mountain in Monticello.

For more information on the Winter Games, call 800-836-6976, or visit www.specialolympicsnewyork.org.

Long Island Welcomes Special Olympics Summer Games

News conference highlights the need for sponsors, fans and volunteers.

New York Jets kickoff returner Chad Morton knows all about challenge: He was always told to make other plans besides the NFL, that he's too short and too slow.

Sean O'Rourke and Craig Ludin also know challenge. As Special Olympics athletes, they too have been told to make other plans in life.

Like Morton, they tuned out the naysayers. As a result,

O'Rourke will run the Half-Marathon at the World Games in Ireland in June, and Ludin well, all he has done is deliver moving speeches in front of hundreds of strangers, and strive to become independent, and hold "a full-time job ... with benefits."

Morton has his own success story. At 5-feet, 8-inches, Morton

finished fourth in the NFL, with 26 yards per return and barely missed being voted to the Pro Bowl.

"I can appreciate and respect what Special Olympics athletes have to face," Morton said as he helped announce that the 2003 and 2004 Summer



Craig Ludin presents at the news conference.



Meghan LaBelle, future athlete, won over the crowd.

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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 will be a very strong feeling of newness within the Special Olympics New York family in 2003.

Three major statewide competitions will be held in new locations: The Winter Games are at the Nevele in Ulster County, the

Summer Games move from Buffalo to Hofstra University on Long Island and the Fall Games are in Seneca Falls, after spending the past two years in Saugerties.

In addition, change will be evident in Nassau and Suffolk counties, which are now in full operation as a single Long Island Region. At least one more region will be created before the calendar turns to 2004, perhaps more.

All of this change has brought

about renewed energy and hope. New volunteers are eager to make the state competitions a success and provide our athletes with a great experience.

With respect to our restructuring, the energy is clearly evident in the words and actions of our volunteer leaders throughout the state, who are enthusiastic in supporting the long-term success of Special Olympics New York by taking active roles in the restructuring. The hope is that all of this new energy will be channeled to create more consistent and comprehensive training and competition programs across New York. This is at the root of our need to restructure, and it seems the message is being received.

There's a slogan – and a logo – we've been using to help capture the essence of regionalization and describe to our network of athletes, sponsors and friends – "In It Together."

In subtle – and not so subtle – ways, the slogan suggests that Special Olympics New York has never been able to accomplish a thing for our athletes without all of us working together. There are more efficient ways to achieve the same end. Together, we'll prove it to ourselves in 2003 and beyond. ■



2003 Calendar of Events

FEBRUARY

- 1 Section 2 – Floor Hockey
Montrose
- 9 Sections 1, 2 & 3 Winter Games
Saratoga Spa State Park
- 9 Rochester Polar Plunge
Ontario Beach, Rochester
- 21-23 2003 Winter Games
Nevele Grande Resort, Ellenville

MARCH

- 1 Fishkill Polar Plunge, Fishkill
- 8 Sections 3 & 4 Bowling (Age 21-)
Clifton Park Bowl, Clifton Park
- 22 Section 4 Aquatics & Basketball
SUNY Oswego

APRIL

- 12 Section 1 Basketball/Aquatics
Fordham University, Bronx
- 27 Section 2 Basketball/Aquatics/Powerlifting
Marist College, Poughkeepsie
- 26 Section 5 Volleyball/Aquatics,
Canisius College, Buffalo

MAY

- 3 Section 3 Basketball/Aquatics
Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs
- 10 Section 5 Basketball
New York Chiropractic College, Seneca Falls
- 17 Section 2 Volleyball, Mamaroneck
- 31 2003 Metro Tournament
Riverbank State Park, Manhattan
- 31 Sections 3, 4 & 5 Summer Games
University at Albany

JUNE

- 9 Winged Foot Golf Classic, Mamaroneck
- 12-15 2003 Summer Games
Hofstra University, Hempstead

* 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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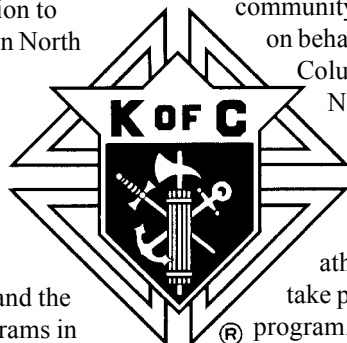
Knights of Columbus Donates \$1 Million to North America

Gift will pay for athlete transportation to World Games in Dublin.

The Supreme Council of the Knights of Columbus has announced it will become an official World Summer Games sponsor by donating \$1 million to Special Olympics programs in North America.

The grant, announced in November by the K of C and Special Olympics, Inc., (SOI) will offset World Summer Games travel costs for more than 1,000 athletes in Canada, Mexico and the United States. It means programs in these nations will be credited \$922.51 for each athlete attending the Summer Games in Dublin.

"In awarding the grant, Supreme Knight Carl Anderson noted that, "The Knights of Columbus, at all levels, have a



long history of supporting the courage and commitment of Special Olympics athletes.

This grant, representing a major youth and community service initiative for 2003, is on behalf of the 1.5 million Knights of

Columbus members throughout North America who honor and cherish the abilities of these outstanding individuals."

The Games will take place June 21 to 29 but athletes will arrive by the 16th to take part in a cultural exchange program. Twenty-eight athletes and six coaches from New York will take part in the Games, which will draw 7,000 athletes from 160 nations. For the New York delegation of athletes, the K of C grant translates to a savings to SOI of \$25,830.28.

The Knights of Columbus, the largest

lay organization in the Catholic church, was founded in 1882 by Father Michael J. McGivney, in the basement of St. Mary's Church in New Haven, Conn. The international headquarters remain in New Haven today, just a few blocks from St. Mary's. In New York, there are 537 councils – or chapters – and 103,000 members.

"We should all thank Mr. Anderson and all Knights of Columbus members and leaders across New York and the United States for providing such a generous gift," said Neal J. Johnson, president and chief executive officer of Special Olympics New York. "The savings that will result from their gift will help athletes throughout North America. On behalf of our delegation, I extend a sincere thanks to the Knights of Columbus." ■

New Year Means New Blood on Board

Four Long-time members leave.

The Special Olympics New York Board of Directors bid farewell to long-standing members and elected new directors at its annual meeting in December.

Susan Brandt of NYSARC, Inc., Menzo Case of Seneca Falls Savings Bank, Cheryl Jonas-Acquilla from the State Office of Children and Family Services, and Carmen Smith of ABC-Disney have left the Board after many years of devotion to the mission. Thomas F. O'Brien, director of the Bureau of Housing and Employment at the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, resigned from the Board at the end of January.

They are replaced by several new members, who now carry on the tradition of providing guidance and service to the athletes of Special Olympics New York.

New members include:

- Timothy Dillon, Athletic Director, Canisius College.
- Stanley S. Hansen, Jr., Executive Coordinator, New York State Education

As we say 'so long' to great friends, I want to welcome our newest members and wish them success as they help us continue the Board's tradition of leadership, counsel and direction for this fantastic organization. We look forward to working with them

**Board Chairman
Anthony J. Bifaro**

Department Office of K-16 Initiatives and Access.

- Judith E. Jackson, Associate Executive Director, Services for the Underserved, New York City.
- Larry Skerker, Executive Vice President, Robinson Knife Company, Buffalo.

"It's never easy when you have to say good-bye to such an outstanding group of Board members. Sue, Menzo,



Anthony J. Bifaro

Cheryl, Carmen and Tom, have provided a great service to our athletes, and this organization will always be grateful for that service," said Board Chairman Anthony J. Bifaro. "As we say 'so long' to great friends, I want to welcome our newest members and wish them success as they help us continue the Board's tradition of leadership, counsel and direction for this fantastic organization. We look forward to working with them." ■

See Page 2 for full Board of Directors listing.

Competition Starts to Heat up the Winter Sports Schedule

Sectionals lead off an action-packed year for Special Olympics athletes.

The holidays are over. The new year is here. Its time for athletes across the state to break out their skis, skates and hockey sticks and get to work. The winter sports season is upon us and the spring season isn't far behind.

Three Sectional Floor Hockey Tournaments and a Sectional Winter Games, in addition to local competitions, will serve to get the athletes of Special Olympics New York ready for the upcoming Winter Games, Feb. 21 to 23. Soon after that, training and competition starts for spring and summer sports including Aquatics, Basketball, Volleyball and Track & Field.

"There's no doubt that the first six months of the year is the busiest time for Special Olympics New York," said Melissa Gross, director of Program. "But the athletes train so hard and accomplish so much, it's well worth all the effort that the staff and volunteers put into it."

If you count state games, Sectionals, Area spring games and all of the other local competitions, nearly 400 Special Olympics competitions take place throughout the state each year. Athletes who compete on a team need to compete in Sectionals in order to move on to the state level.

"Year-round training and competition isn't just a marketing tool," Jennifer Whipple, sectional sports director, said. "With over 20 sports offered, athletes could train and compete in a variety of sports throughout the entire year. And many of them do."

Adding to the whirlwind sports schedule, the state Winter, Summer and Fall Games will all take place in new locations in 2003. And let's not forget the World Summer Games in Dublin. It looks to be an exciting year for just about everyone at Special Olympics New York. ■



Special Olympics
New York

2003 Competition Schedule

January 11	Section 3, 4 & 5 Floor Hockey	NY Chiropractic College, Seneca Falls
January 18	Section 1 Floor Hockey	Jacob Javits Convention Center, Manhattan
February 1	Section 2 Floor Hockey	Hendrick Hudson High School, Montrose
February 9	Sections 1,2,3 Winter Games	Saratoga Spa State Park
February 21-23	Winter Games	Nevele Grande, Ellenville
March 8	Sections 3 & 4 Bowling (under 21)	Clifton Park Bowl, Clifton Park
March 22	Section 4 Basketball/Aquatics	SUNY at Oswego
April 12	Section 1 Basketball/Aquatics	Fordham University, Bronx
April 26	Section 5 Aquatics/Volleyball	Canisius College, Buffalo
April 27	Section 2 Basketball/Aquatics	Marist College, Poughkeepsie
May 3	Section 3 Aquatics/Basketball	Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs
May 10	Section 5 Basketball	New York Chiropractic College, Seneca Falls
May 17	Section 2 Volleyball	Mamaroneck
May 31	Metro Tournament	Riverbank State Park, Manhattan
May 31	Sections 3 & 4 Summer Games	University at Albany
June 12 - 15	2003 Summer Games	Hofstra University, Hempstead
June 21 - 30	2003 World Summer Games	Dublin, Ireland
September 6	Sections 3, 4 & 5	NY Chiropractic College, Seneca Falls
September 13	Softball/Soccer Team/Bocce	Collins Park, Scotia
TBD	Sections 3, 4 & 5	Hudson Valley (TBD)
TBD	Softball/Soccer Skills/Bocce	Rochester
TBD	Fall Classic (Section 1 & 2)	Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs
October 10-12	Section 5 Softball/Bocce	NY Chiropractic College, Seneca Falls
October 25	Section 3 Equestrian	Pine Lanes, South Glens Falls
October 25	Fall Games	Lakeview Lanes, Fulton
TBD	Section 3 Bowling	New Windsor
TBD	Section 4 Bowling	Brooklyn
TBD	Section 2 Bowling	AMF Olympic Lanes, Rochester
November 1-2	Section 1 Bowling	Pin-O-Rama, Utica
November 8-9	Bowling West	TBD
TBD	Bowling Central	
TBD	Bowling East	

Please visit www.specialolympicsnewyork.org for schedule updates.



Manhattan and Bronx Floor Hockey teams faced off at the Jacob Javits Convention Center (left). Manhattan brought home the Gold. The competition was just as fierce in Seneca Falls (right). Here Areas 16 and 24 wait for the whistle. Teams wishing to compete at the Winter Games must compete at one of these Sectionals.

SONY Staff

Summer Games at Hofstra

Continued from P 1.

Games would be held in Jets Country, Long Island. "They are an inspiration."

Special Olympics New York hopes to inspire Long Islanders when 2,800 athletes and coaches come to Hofstra University June 12 to 15, 2003, and June 17 to 20, 2004. It will be the first time the state's largest competition has been held on Long Island.

Volunteers, sponsors and many other types of supporters are needed to make the Games a success.

"I was so excited to find out that the Summer Games will be held right here in our back yard," said Ludin, "Thank you Hofstra for hosting the Games and thanks to all the sponsors that are helping to make this event possible for me and all the other athletes."

Hofstra was selected because of its outstanding facilities and its ability to manage the many services needed to host a Special Olympics competition and house the many delegations.

"As the first private college in America to offer persons with disabilities a campus of 100 percent accessible programs and activities, it is with open arms and an absence of barriers that we proudly welcome Special Olympics New York and the Special Olympics athletes to Hofstra University," said Hofstra President Stuart Rabinowitz.

Summer Games athletes will compete in Basketball, Bowling, Gymnastics, Power Lifting, Roller Skating, Swimming, Tennis,

Track & Field and Volleyball. Hofstra will serve as the host venue and will be the site of most competitions. Other venues will be announced at a later date.

Besides quality competition, the Summer Games will be highlighted by the pageantry and

entertainment of the traditional Opening Ceremonies, which will include fireworks, musical entertainment, the completion of the Law Enforcement Torch Run and the lighting of



Noah Burroughs of the New York Dragons arena football team, signs an autograph for Long Island athlete Alyssa Scroope.

SONY Staff

the Special Olympics Cauldron to signify the start of the Games.

"We are looking forward to an outstanding experience at Hofstra University and in Nassau County," said Neal J. Johnson, president and chief executive officer of Special Olympics New York.

"On behalf of our athletes, I would like to invite members of the Long Island community to become part of the celebration known as Special Olympics and support the Summer Games

by becoming a volunteer, a fan or a sponsor. We promise you a great experience."

Special Olympics competitions are true community events and offer many opportunities for residents, youth groups and civic groups to volunteer, sponsor athletes and supply in-kind donations.



Chad Morton of the New York Jets meets Meghan LaBelle of Long Island. LaBelle participates in Long Island's early intervention programs.

SONY Staff



Corporate sponsorships also are offered. Summer Games sponsors to date include Cingular Wireless and the New York Lottery.

"I think it's cool that the Summer Games will be held on Long Island," said Sean O'Rourke. "I live on Long Island, so my family and friends can come and watch me run this year." ■



Peter Sylver, Director of Economic Development in Nassau County, believes the Games will have a positive economic impact.

There are many ways to help

Sponsor the Games

To become a corporate sponsor, or to sponsor an individual athlete or team, please call Robert Blaustein, 212-661-3963, or e-mail rblauste@nyso.org.

Volunteer

To register yourself or your organization, visit www.specialolympicsnewyork.org, call Diana Bennett at 518-388-0790, or e-mail dbennett@nyso.org.

Be a Fan

Our athletes love fans. Attend Opening Ceremonies or the competitions with your youth group, church group, civic group or business group. Or just bring the family. For details, visit www.specialolympicsnewyork.org, call Diana Bennett at 518-388-0790, or e-mail dbennett@nyso.org.

Around the State

Oneida & Herkimer Counties

-Area 12

Special Olympics Bocce teams from Onondaga County and Seneca Falls joined local Rome teams at the fourth annual Bocce Classic at the Toccolana Club in December. This was the first year that visiting teams participated. An awards party for the athletes, coaches and family members followed the tournament.

Chemung, Schuyler & Steuben Counties

-Area 15

This year, the ARC of Schuyler County and the Chemung ARC will celebrate their 25th and 50th anniversaries, respectively. Area 15 will recognize both organizations during its Spring Games in Watkins Glen in May.

Jefferson & Lewis Counties - Area 19

The South Lewis middle and high schools in Turin, will host Area 18's Winter Games on Jan. 31. The event has been held in Lewis County for more than 25 years. Athletes will compete in Skiing, Snowshoeing, Floor Hockey and Adapted sports.

Madison County - Area 28

Area 28 is seeking crafters for its 13th Annual Craft Show March 1 at Oneida High School. For more information, or to rent a table, please call Laurie Ann Ross at 315-363-6870.

Staten Island - Area 35

Tim Whalen and Megan Melvin each finished first in the men's and women's divisions of the 12th Annual Special Olympics Jingle Bell Run. The two-mile run was Dec. 15 at the Elizabeth Connelly Center. The event raises money for Staten Island's Special Olympics programs.

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

Procter & Gamble Launches Annual National Campaign to Benefit Special Olympics

For the 23rd consecutive year, Procter & Gamble (P&G) launched its annual January cause-marketing campaign in the United States to benefit Special Olympics. The campaign began with a 12-page freestanding coupon insert distributed through more than 50 million newspapers in the United States in late December. Every P&G product sold in the month of January will result in a \$.10 donation (up to \$750,000) to Special Olympics.

The Cincinnati, Ohio-based company will commit a minimum of \$1.65 million to Special Olympics in the United States in 2003, with almost \$1.3 million allocated to local Special Olympics programs. Over the 23-year history of the relationship, P&G has raised more than \$26 million for the Special Olympics movement. A recent P&G survey rated Special Olympics number one among P&G consumers when compared to other national charities.

"Procter & Gamble has had a

relationship with Special Olympics that has spanned over three decades. This relationship continues to be a strong one because our organizations share the same core values," said Jim O'Connell, manager of corporate events at P&G. "Our cause-marketing promotions for more than 40 P&G brands continue to be successful, delivering outstanding sales volume results for us and increased exposure and fund-raising capability for Special Olympics. We are proud to be a part of the power of Special Olympics."

Retailers across the country placed no-cost, in-store advertising alerting customers to purchase P&G products and help support Special Olympics, raising awareness about the campaign and educating consumers about Special Olympics. Retailers who participated in New York included Eckerd, P&C Foods, Hannaford, Family Dollar and Quality Markets. ■



Two PolarPlunges Planned This Brutal Winter

Dippers support LETR.

With temperatures hovering near zero throughout the state, one would have to be crazy to go outside without a coat, much less jump into a freezing body of water. Thankfully for Special Olympics New York there are enough crazy people around for not one, but two Polar Plunges.

The first will be at Ontario Beach Park in Rochester on Feb. 9. It will mark the third year plungers have taken the leap into Lake Ontario. The second is being planned for Fishkill on March 1.

"We're hoping to have a really large turnout for both Plunges despite the extreme weather," said Jeanne Mesick, Torch Run liaison. "Both communities have been very supportive in the past and I wouldn't be surprised if our numbers go up

this year."

The Polar Plunges are two of the many fund-raising events that are part of The Law Enforcement Torch Run (LETR). Law enforcement personnel organize and run these events across the state. Other events planned for this year are the LETR Fire Truck Pull in May and the LETR Capital District Golf Tournament in September.

For more information on the Polar Plunges or any LETR event, call Jeanne Mesick at 518-388-0790, or e-mail her at jmesick@nyso.org. You can also visit www.specialolympicsnewyork.org for a complete calendar of events. ■



Point of View

By Pete Lawrence

I recently came across the following paragraph while surfing the net. It attempts to explain the differences between the Paralympics and Special Olympics.

"The Paralympic Games provide world-class competition for elite disabled athletes at the highest level. Much like Olympians, Paralympians compete for gold, silver and bronze medals against the best-disabled athletes in the world. Special Olympics International focuses on participation of everyone and involves athletes from ages 8 to 80 with mental retardation. All participants are considered winners and receive medals."

It was in the education section of the U.S. Olympic Team Web site. I am sure the intention was not to misrepresent what we do on a daily basis, but I found it troubling. When comparing the two organizations, it insinuates that Special Olympic does not provide "world-class competition for elite disabled athletes" and then finishes with "...all participants receive medals." I do not want to get into a comparison of Special Olympics and the Paralympics, both wonderful organizations. I would, however, like to focus on why we can no longer accept statements that misrepresent what we do.

Do we really offer world-class competition?

I am not sure. Maybe we should ask Peter Pelligrino about his hole-in-one at the National Golf tournament in Florida. It was a Special Olympics competition, so Peter probably got to tee off close to the hole, right? There was probably a volunteer that said, "Jeez, this is just a Special Olympics competition, how about if I kick his ball in the hole?" Ridiculous? I think so, but then again I think that Special Olympics *is* world-class competition. Maybe we should talk to Tray Greene, Speed Skater from Rochester. A couple of years ago Tray qualified for the nationals in Speed Skating, the "REAL" nationals.

That same year I had the pleasure to be part of Team New York's World Games delegation in Anchorage, Alaska. I was proud of Tray's accomplishments, and soon became his biggest promoter. I couldn't wait to tell everyone about his pending trip to the nationals. The day of the race came, and to my surprise, Tray

wasn't the top seed. He was seeded third. I thought there must be some mistake; Tray is going to the nationals. I then realized that there is a Tray Greene in each of our programs around the world. Did Tray win the race? I don't remember. I just remember him skating at a world-class competition.

All participants receive medals.

I learned this lesson early in my career as a Special Olympics coach in Montgomery County. I was lucky enough to coach an athlete named Jimmy Gargiulo, who had just been selected to participate in the International Special Olympics Games in South Bend, Ind. This was an especially proud moment for Jimmy because his father and his sister both graduated from Notre Dame. Jimmy was selected to participate in the race walk, and was excited about the opportunity to compete with athletes from around the world. As the gun went off in Jimmy's race, he quickly fell behind faster walkers. The urge to win overcame him and he began to run, just a few quick steps to catch up with the leader. Immediately the judge's hand went up to signal a disqualification. Jimmy was notified after his race that he would not receive a medal. I am sure we all have stories like Jimmy's, many on a much smaller stage but always difficult to swallow. Should we relax the rules? No. That would only diminish the accomplishments of our athletes.

What does all this mean? As supporters of Special Olympics New York, Inc., we need to take a more active role in promoting what we do. We can accomplish this in many ways; by word of mouth, by marketing or –what I believe is the most important way – by producing high quality events for well-trained athletes. Special Olympics is world-class competition for athletes with mental retardation. And even though not everyone has a medal to show for it, the above description did get one thing right; each of our athletes is a winner.

Point of View is written periodically. Pete Lawrence is the director of competition for Special Olympics New York. To submit a column idea call, 212-661-3963, or e-mail dhand@nyso.org. ■



State Staff Changes

- ▶ Bill Collins has joined the Special Olympics New York staff as the director of field services, Section 2. The position was vacated by Jeff Countois in November.
- ▶ Bernadette Donahue, director of field services, Section 4, has moved into a new office at 800 South Wilbur Ave, Syracuse, NY, 13204. She can be reached at 315-473-3153 or e-mail her at bdonohue@nyso.org.
- ▶ Nichole Geracitano has left her position as director of development in the Schenectady office.
- ▶ Rebecca Rickert will assume the role of Associate Director of Development responsible for Satins Gala/Luncheon and upstate sponsorship. Her duties included the overseeing and planning of all alumni events including auctions and corporate development.

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Special Olympics New York

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Support Team NY!

*Purchase a Claddagh pin to
send our athletes to Dublin.*

Be a part of the action as the Special Olympics Flame of Hope makes its way to Dublin this June for the 2003 World Summer Games.

Help make it possible for the athletes of Special Olympics New York to compete by purchasing a pin.

Then wear it in support as our athletes get ready to go for the gold in Ireland.

*To order, visit our website at
www.specialolympicsnewyork.org or
contact Laurie Kennedy at 585-271-5151
or e-mail lkennedy@nyso.org*



Claddagh

The Claddagh Ring is truly an endearing symbol of Irish culture and sentiment.

There are many stories about the Claddagh ring. Claddagh itself refers to a small fishing village just near Galway city. The Claddagh ring is thought to have originated in this area. The ring has a design of a heart being encircled by a pair of delicate hands with a crown above the heart. In earlier times this design was the symbol of the "Fishing Kings of Claddagh" meaning "in love and friendship let us reign". In the 17th century the symbol was first depicted on a ring which became the fashionable exchange of friends or lovers. In marriage the heart was worn towards the wrist otherwise towards the fingertips.

LOVE ♦ FRIENDSHIP & FAITH ♦ LOYALTY & FIDELITY

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.