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## Summer Games Registration Information



The largest event of the year for Special Olympics Iowa is just around the corner! May 17-19 Special Olympics Iowa will host the annual State Summer Games. The 2018 Summer Games will be held in Ames at Iowa State University. With over 2,000 athletes, 1,200 coaches and 2,000 volunteers, this event kicks off summer in a big way! This fun-filled three-day event kicks off with the Torch Run Final Leg bringing the Flame of Hope from downtown Des

Moines to Hilton Coliseum for the Opening Ceremonies.

As Summer Games approaches, don't forget to register your teams after your area competitions. There are a variety of events to compete in: bocce, cycling, soccer, track and field, tennis and swimming. Registration Deadlines are as followed: April 16, 2018 (swimming, athletics).

You can find registration forms [here](#).

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## SOIA Athletes to Compete at 2018 Drake Relays



*By Stephanie Kocer*

On Friday, April 27, eight Special Olympics Iowa (SOIA) teams from across the state will compete at the 2018 Drake Relays at Drake Stadium on Drake University's campus in Des Moines. The teams will run a 4×100 relay race. The Special Olympics teams will include:

Scott County Adult Females  
Arc of Story County Females  
Griswold Tigers  
Grandwood Hawks  
Waterloo Goodwill  
Cedar Rapids Park and Rec Cheetahs  
Clinton County Special Olympics  
Des Moines Roosevelt Roughriders

This will be the first time in the history of the Drake Relays that Special Olympics teams will compete.

"For decades, the Drake Relays has helped launch athletes to unrivaled athletic success. Each year, many of the world's best athletes begin their season on the Blue Oval and end their season on a medal podium. We're honored to partner with the Special Olympics Iowa to provide these tremendous and inspiring athletes the same opportunity to race on the Blue Oval as they prepare to advance and represent the state of Iowa at the Special Olympics USA Games," says Blake Boldon, Director of the Drake Relays. [Continue Reading](#)

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## DMPS First-Ever Unified Sports Day

The Des Moines Public School District will host its first-ever Unified Sports Day on April 19 at the Knapp Center on Drake University's campus.

In December of 2017, all ten Des Moines Middle Schools became active [Unified Champion Schools](#), meaning that in partnership with Special Olympics Iowa they committed to pursuing [Unified Sports](#), Student Leadership and School-Wide Awareness of intellectual disabilities. Next year, the district will register a number of elementary schools as Unified Champion Schools as well.



The goal of this initiative is to build upon and promote to students the concept of inclusion and acceptance across the school district.

There is still time to sign-up to volunteer at the event. [Sign-up online today to get involved!](#)

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## Sammons Financial Group Sponsors Annual Ankeny Young Athletes Play Day



*By Emma Finn*

On April 12 **Sammons Financial Group** will help host the 4th annual Young Athletes Play Day at Ankeny Centennial High School in Ankeny. Young Athletes Play Days are designed to provide activities and socialization opportunities for children with and without intellectual disabilities between the ages of two and seven.

Play Days give children who are too young to participate in formal Special Olympics events an opportunity to compete and engage in Olympic activities. It is an event that helps promote inclusion and acceptance at a young age.

Sammons Financial Group has been a Statewide Partner with Special Olympics Iowa (SOIA) for 10 years. This year, 50 volunteers from Sammons are scheduled to help out at the event. They do everything from helping put lunches together to handing out awards to participants.

“We have a lot of repeat offenders, once they volunteer at this event they become hooked,” says Mary Buscher, a Human Resources Manager for Sammons and a long-time SOIA volunteer.

Buscher explained how unique this event is because it is giving athletes at a young age the opportunity to compete, while also giving children with and without intellectual disabilities the

## Mid-Winter Tournament Recap

Special Olympics Iowa would like to thank all of the athletes, coaches, volunteers and families that made this year's Mid-Winter Tournament in Iowa City a success!

Over 1,000 athletes competed at the event in basketball, basketball skills, gymnastics, cheerleading and dance, and powerlifting. Congratulations to all of the athletes who participated!

Find more photos from the 2018 Mid-Winter Tournament on our [Facebook page](#)!



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## Staff Column: What the Polar Plunge Means to Me





*By Emma Finn, Marketing & Communications Intern (middle left)*

This April will mark my third year of raising money and participating in the Greek Community's "Polar Bear Plunge" at Iowa State University. As a freshmen I knew very little about what the Polar Plunge was. I knew to an extent what Special Olympics was, but I never fully understood what I was raising the money for. That year I raised my \$75 for the plunge and participated.

Then my sophomore year came around and I became friends with Katie Buscher. Katie has been a volunteer for Special Olympics Iowa for years, along with her parents Dan and Mary and sisters Lizzy and Annie. The Buscher family's passion as advocates and volunteers for SOIA is truly inspiring. Getting to know their family better and meeting Katie's uncle Michael who is a SOIA athlete, helped me realize more about what SOIA really was. The Buscher families' kindness, generosity and involvement with SOIA inspired me beyond belief. That year for the plunge I raised \$575.

Fall of my junior year rolled around, which is when the SOIA State Volleyball tournament is held in Ames. One of my good friends, Mallory Majors, helped run the event. Mallory had such dedication and drive when helping organize the event. She came home that day after the tournament with a smile on her face and loads of stories that stuck with me. It was then that I decided I wanted to get more involved with SOIA. [Continue Reading](#)

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## Meet Team Iowa: Sioux City Unified Bowling Team

*By Emma Finn*

A Unified Bowling team from Sioux City West Middle School will be representing Iowa in the 2018 Special Olympics USA

Games held in Seattle, Washington July 1-6. The team is made up of four players: Ron Schmidt, Estrella Tejeda, Ann Newton and JJ Reeg-Beckner.

Although Bowling does not belong to the Olympic sports, it is among the most popular sports in Special Olympics. It is a particularly beneficial sport to people with intellectual disabilities, regardless of their age or sports abilities, since it ensures physical exercise and at the same time participation and social integration.



The team is extremely excited for this once in a lifetime opportunity. They will be the only bowling team representing Iowa at USA Games, and it will be the first year these athletes have been on a team together.

Ron Schmidt, a Unified Partner on the team described how when practicing they all learn from one another. He explained how he teaches the athletes things while he also learns new things from them. Schmidt also commented on the team's good sportsmanship.

"They always make sure to shake the opponent's hands and say good job at the end of every game, even if they lose," says Schmidt. [Continue Reading](#)

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## Des Moines Register Sports Awards Nominations

[The Des Moines Register Sports Awards](#) recognizes and honors top athletes from across the state of Iowa in 21 sports categories. This event is hosted by the Des Moines Register and will take place June 23, 2018 at Wells Fargo Arena in downtown Des Moines. The show features various awards, contests and a special appearance from a celebrity guest, Venus Williams! The red carpet will open at 6 p.m. and the awards show begins promptly at 7 p.m.



Special Olympics Iowa athletes have the opportunity to be nominated in one of three categories —SOIA Female Athlete of the Year, SOIA Male Athlete of the Year, and SOIA Unified Pair of the Year. To be considered for these awards, athletes must be high school-aged (14-22), be heavily involved in SOIA events, and be a representation of SOIA in their community. The event is in Des Moines, so we ask that when you're considering athletes to nominate that they be able and willing to travel to Des Moines for the award ceremony, understanding this will be at their own cost.



Please be aware that there will be three nominees in each of the SOIA categories. SOIA staff will choose one winner in each category who will receive a trophy and a chance to meet the celebrity guest at the Sports Awards. Please contact Stephanie Kocer at [skocer@soiowa.org](mailto:skocer@soiowa.org) or 515-986-5520 with any questions. Nominations are due April 3, 2018.

### [Nomination Form](#)

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## Truck Raffle for SOIA



Buy a \$5 Ticket for  
Your Chance to Win a  
2018 Ford F-150!

Purchase Tickets From Any Special  
Olympics Iowa Athlete

-Or-

From the State Office

Give Us A Call At 515-986-5520 or  
email [info@soiowa.org](mailto:info@soiowa.org).

# RECONCILIATION FORMS:

Ford F-150 Best Practices for the Field  
Delegation Reconciliation Forms

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## 50 For 50 Years

# \$50 FOR 50 YEARS



**GIVE \$50 TO  
CELEBRATE  
50 YEARS OF  
SPECIAL OLYMPICS  
& GET YOUR  
CHOICE OF GOLD  
PIN OR COIN!**



2018 marks 50 years for the Special Olympics. That means 50 years of our volunteers, staff, and supporters working tirelessly to achieve our mission – a world without discrimination. A world where individuals with intellectual disabilities can tap their untold potential and live their lives to the fullest.

Special Olympics Iowa asks you to join us in celebrating 50 years of bliss, bravery and empowerment by donating in our **\$50 for 50 campaign** in honor of the 50th Anniversary of Special Olympics. With each \$50 donation, donors will get their choice of a limited-edition commemorative 50th Anniversary Gold Pin or Gold Coin.

Special Olympics Iowa is so proud of what has been accomplished over the past 50 years. With 5 million served in over 172 countries, we have changed many lives all over the world. Help us continue to make a difference in athlete's lives.

***DONATE NOW***

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## **SOIA Athletes Invited to Monthly Karaoke Night in Des Moines Starting April 10!**





**KARAOKE NIGHT  
AT JEANNIE'S BOTTLE  
APRIL 10<sup>TH</sup>  
4-7PM**



*Jeannie's Bottle*

Merle Hay Road • Des Moines, IA

**3839 MERLE HAY ROAD  
DES MOINES, IOWA**

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*Upcoming Events at SOIA*

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**Polar Plunges**

Brrrrrrring on the cold! Whether you plunge solo or with coworkers, friends or family – for the ultimate bonding experience – we'll help you take "cool" up a degree or two.

Being a Plunger means cooling your body while warming hearts. The Polar Plunge® is a signature fundraiser for Special Olympics and offers a unique opportunity for individuals and organizations to raise money and support Special Olympics Iowa athletes by jumping into frigid waters.

Upcoming Plunges:

**Iowa City**

**Date:** Saturday, April 14

**Location:** Coralville Lake, West Outlook Beach

**Cost:** \$75 fundraising minimum

**Cedar Falls/Waterloo, Presented By Lincoln Savings Bank**

**Date:** Saturday, April 14

**Location:** George Wyth State Park

**Cost:** \$75 fundraising minimum

**Cedar Rapids**

**Date:** Saturday, April 21

**Location:** Pleasant Creek, Palo

**Cost:** \$75



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## **Texas Roadhouse Luncheon April 5**

# TEXAS ROADHOUSE LUNCHEON

BENEFITING **SPECIAL OLYMPICS IOWA**

THURSDAY, APRIL 5TH

11 A.M. - 2 P.M.

Come join us for a **"FREE"** lunch served by local law enforcement!

Simply leave a donation at your table and 100% of your donation goes to Special Olympics Iowa!



## Menu Includes:

Pulled pork • side • rolls • tea/pop/water

## Participating locations:

Ames, Cedar Falls, Cedar Rapids, Coralville, Council Bluffs,  
Davenport, Dubuque, Urbandale, Sioux City



## LETR Crappie Tournament Fundraiser May 2 and 3

Come join us on Wednesday, May 2 and Thursday, May 3 for the annual LETR Crappie Tournament. May 2 is a practice day, the steak fry, and a raffle to raise money for Special Olympics Iowa! May 3 is the big tournament date! The steak fry and raffle will start at 6:00 p.m. May 2 at The Lodge located at the Three





Mile Lake Recreation Area. Bring plenty of cash for raffle tickets!

The entry fee is \$70.00 per person. Rules are with each two-person team weighing their 20 biggest crappies (To minimize the number of fish killed, each team should sort on the lake and bring only 20 fish to the weigh-in site). Entry fee covers the cost of the steak fry, big fish contest, and prize money. \$30 from each entry fee will be donated to Special Olympics Iowa. \$5 from each entry fee goes toward the Biggest Crappie prize!

**[More Info](#)**

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**PROUDLY PRESENTS**  
**YOUTH GAMES**

The mission of Youth Games is to offer positive sports experiences and grow youth sports participation within Special Olympics.

**Friday, April 20th 2018**

**10:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M.**

**9:30 A.M. - Participant Registration**

**Hawkeye Recreation Fields**

**The University of Iowa – Iowa City, Iowa**

The event is **free of cost** and each athlete will receive lunch. Athletes will also receive a **free t-shirt!** Sports instruction and competition is limited to youth ages 6 to 21 years of age with intellectual disabilities.

Participants will choose between track & field, flag football, and soccer and spend the day learning and mastering the skills of that sport!

Parents who bring their child can stick around and enjoy our "Parents Pavilion." Here you can socialize with other parents or stop at a booth from area agencies/businesses to talk about what they might have to offer.



To register, please complete the form at the following link:

<https://goo.gl/forms/6Z05lYfHeCZcp1rp1>

Questions: contact Erin Birkenholtz  
at [ebirkenholtz@soiowa.org](mailto:ebirkenholtz@soiowa.org) or 515-986-5520

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**IOWA ATHLETICS**  
**GROUP INVITE**

**ALL SPECIAL OLYMPIC ATHLETES ARE INVITED TO  
ATTEND IOWA ATHLETIC EVENTS!**

**INCENTIVES INCLUDE:**

- **PRIZE PACKS**
- **IN-GAME RECOGNITION**
- **POST-GAME MEET &  
GREET WITH THE TEAM**

**SWIMMING & DIVING**

***January 12 vs. Notre Dame/Illinois @ 7pm***

**TRACK & FIELD**

***January 27 - Black & Gold Premier @ 2pm***

**MEN'S TENNIS**

***March 4 vs. Oregon @ 11am***

**WOMEN'S TENNIS**

***April 22 vs. Wisconsin @ 12pm***

**ADMISSION IS FREE TO EACH EVENT.**

**RSVP TO AARON HOWARD**

**Aaron-Howard@hawkeyesports.com or (319) 335-9431**



**Special Olympics**  
Iowa



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## **Coaches Corner**

### **Coaches' Guide Available Online!**

The 2017-2018 SOIA Coaches' Guide is now available on our [website](#)!

### **Trainings**

Getting involved as a coach and re-certification is now easier than ever!

Check out our new "Become a Coach" page:



You can now become certified/re-certified **ONLINE!**

### **Registration Forms Available Online**

Registration forms for Challenge Days and Young Athlete Play Days are now available online! Go to the **Participation Forms** page on our website to view registration forms for all SOIA events.

### **Sing the National Anthem at Summer Games!**

SOIA is looking for a National Anthem performer (s) for our Summer Games Opening Ceremonies on Thursday, May 17. Please send a 15 – 20 second video to the performer (s) singing the National Anthem to Rhonda Schwarzkopf at [rschwarzkopf@soiowa.org](mailto:rschwarzkopf@soiowa.org) by April 1. If you have any questions please contact Rhonda at 515-986-5520 or [rschwarzkopf@soiowa.org](mailto:rschwarzkopf@soiowa.org).

### **Bocce Skills Revised**

There has been a change to bocce skills at Summer Games. The event will now be measured in **feet**, not meters. Please contact Sally Briggs at [sbriggs@soiowa.org](mailto:sbriggs@soiowa.org) or 515-986-5520 with questions.

### **Share Your Story!**

Do you know someone with a great story to share? We're always looking to share our athletes' stories in the newsletter. If you have a story idea for us about an athlete, coach, volunteer, or family please email Stephanie Kocer at [skocer@soiowa.org](mailto:skocer@soiowa.org) for a chance for them to be featured in the newsletter!

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## **Event Calendar**

Visit our **online calendar** for event updates!

### **April**

- 5- Texas Roadhouse Luncheon Fundraiser
- 6- Ames Greek Polar Plunge
- 7- East Area Spring Games
- 7- East Central Area Spring Games
- 7- Cedar Falls Challenge Day
- 7- Central Area Spring Games
- 7- Southeast Area Spring Games
- 10- Southwest Area Spring Games
- 10- West Central Area Spring Games
- 10- West Central Area Swimming
- 12- North Central Spring Games
- 12- Ankeny Young Athletes Play Day
- 12- North Area Spring Games
- 14- Grinnell College Unified Sports Day
- 14- Northwest Area Spring Games
- 14- South Central Area Spring Games
- 14- Cedar Falls/Waterloo Polar Plunge
- 14- Iowa City Polar Plunge
- 19 DMPS Special Olympics Unified Sports Day- Inclusion Unites All

19- Cedar Rapids Young Athlete Play Day  
20- SOIA Youth Games  
21- Cedar Rapids Polar Plunge  
25- Western Regional UCS Youth Summit  
26- River Hills Young Athletes Play Day  
27- Drake Relays

## May

3- Drake University Unified Sports Day  
3- Crappie Tournament Fundraiser  
7- Camp Courageous  
17- State Summer Games  
18- State Summer Games  
19- State Summer Games

## June

1-30- Casey's Promotion  
2- Emmetsburg Challenge Day  
23- Plane Pull Fundraiser  
23- Des Moines Register Sports Awards

### Thank You to Our Partners!

#### Champion Statewide Partners



#### Premier Statewide Partners



Special Olympics Iowa



[www.soiowa.org](http://www.soiowa.org)