



Mid-Winter Tournament



The Mid-Winter Tournament is Special Olympics Iowa's own version of March Madness! Held annually in Iowa City, more than 1,000 athletes and Unified Sports partners can be seen competing at the University of Iowa Field House, Iowa City West High School and Iowa City High.

Healthy Athletes screenings will also be provided to athletes by healthcare professionals.

EVENT DETAILS

Date: March 10-11, 2017

Location: Iowa City

Competitions: Basketball, cheerleading/dance, gymnastics (artistic & rhythmic) and powerlifting

[More Info](#)

SOIA Athletes and Supporters Will Pledge to End the "R-Word" On March 1!



By: Chelsey Kimmel-Kendrick

Join us on our quest as we continue to educate people around the world about the [Spread the Word to End the Word® Campaign](#) on March 1. The "R-word" is a commonly used word in our society today. By using that word, you are affecting the attitudes and feelings of the millions of people who have, or know someone, with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

This grassroots campaign continues to strive for a community that is offensive-free and acceptable of every person by spreading the word through school events, rallies and social networking. Every year, Iowa's Special Olympic athletes and supporters gather at the Iowa State Capitol in Des Moines in an effort to continue to raise awareness and share their stories. They encourage others to pledge to put an end to using the "r-word" by signing petitions, banners or by taking an oath. [Continue Reading](#)

SOIA Welcomes UnitedHealthcare as a Premier Statewide Partner



Special Olympics Iowa is happy to announce that in 2017, UnitedHealthcare became a SOIA Premier Statewide Partner and a sponsor of Challenge Days and the Healthy Athletes program, positively impacting thousands of Iowans with intellectual disabilities.

UnitedHealthcare fits right in with the SOIA mission, as the company works every day "to help people live healthier lives." The company has a strong history with SOIA, serving as a Gold Level Sponsor in past years before coming on as a Statewide Partner. And in 2016-2017, in collaboration with Iowa State University and SOIA, they started the "Athlete of the Game" presentation at ten men's basketball games at ISU, where a Special Olympics' athlete is

recognized on the floor at Hilton Coliseum and presented with an autographed basketball. Prior to that, UnitedHealthcare donated \$25,000 to support SOIA programs and activities across the state.

On Saturday, April 8, as a part of their sponsorship at ISU games, UnitedHealthcare will honor all Special Olympics athletes at the ISU Spring Game. The game starts at 1 p.m. and the event is free. They encourage everyone to come! [Continue Reading](#)

FREE Game at Jack Trice Stadium for SOIA Athletes and Family

On Saturday, April 8 Iowa State University will hold its annual free spring football game. SOIA athletes and family and friends are invited to attend the game and be a part of a Special Olympics section! The athlete section is being sponsored by Learfield Sports and SOIA Statewide Sponsor UnitedHealthcare. More details will be announced in March.

EVENT DETAILS

WHEN: Saturday, April 8

WHERE: Jack Trice Stadium, Iowa State University campus

WHAT: Free spring football game

WHO: Athletes and their families and friends

Call the state office at 515-986-5520 with questions.

SOIA Athlete Headed to World Winter Games

By: Chelsey Kimmel-Kendrick

Tabitha Darnell was named an outstanding Olympic Athlete of the Year in 2008, was named a Big 12 Special Olympian of the Year in 2009, and has received many ribbons and medals since she started participating in the Special Olympics at age eight. Now, she's 36 years old, and she's headed to the World Winter Games in Austria.

The World Games are an international competition where Special Olympic athletes from more than 170 countries participate. The Winter Games include skiing, skating, snowboarding, snowshoeing, floor hockey, floorball and stick shooting. This year's event will be taking place in March in three locations in Austria: Graz, Schladming and Ramsau. Davenport's Darnell will be skiing like she has since she was 13 years old. She will not only be representing Iowa, but Team USA as well. This isn't Darnell's first World Games event. She went to Dublin, Ireland in 2003. [Continue Reading](#)



Dee Sturgeon Receives Jefferson Award for Public Service

By: Chelsey Kimmel-Kendrick

"I'm a real humble person," a line Dee Sturgeon knows all too well. She has been a volunteer for more than 25 years as an events coordinator for American Cancer Society's Relay for Life event, and has been a coach for Special Olympics Iowa for more than 30 years. Sturgeon doesn't do it for the recognition though. She does

it to inspire others.

"I have the time," she says. "I just think that it's the right thing to do; Volunteers can inspire others to do it."

And that she did. Sturgeon is also an instructional assistant for students with special needs, in addition to her volunteer work. She says her classroom kids were motivated by her work. For their middle school Spread the Word to End the Word® campaign, they offered to help. Some of the kids volunteered to make PSAs to inform the media about the event; others wrote speeches to share - all of which, Sturgeon says, were attributed to her volunteerism.

"It's kind of cool to see the kids get involved because I get involved," she says. [Continue Reading](#)

Sign Up Today for the SOIA Youth Games!

Special Olympics
Iowa



PROUDLY PRESENTS
YOUTH GAMES

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

Saturday, April 22 2017

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, basketball, 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/VIRxtTBeIVHOy7Sh2>

Questions: contact Erin Birkenholtz
at ebirkenholtz@soiowa.org or 515-986-5520

Special Olympics Night Out with the Iowa Energy

On Sunday, March 12 Special Olympics Iowa athletes and their families are invited to the Iowa Energy basketball game against the Santa Cruz Warriors. The game starts at 4 p.m. Tickets are \$5 each and SOIA athletes and cheer team will be performing during the game. It's also Super Hero Night, so everyone is encouraged to dress up as their favorite hero for the game!

To reserve your tickets, contact Kyle Davy at kdavy@lowaNBA.com or



515-564-8563.

Tickets can also be purchased online at <https://groupmatics.events/SO17>

Annual Awards Nomination Form Now Available

Every year at the Opening Ceremonies of Summer Games SOIA awards dedicated individuals for their commitment to the Special Olympics mission. **The Distinguished Service Awards** provide a unique and important opportunity to recognize outstanding members of the SOIA community. These individuals embody the dedication, enthusiasm and ambition Special Olympics is known for.

If you'd like to nominate someone for any of the award categories you can fill out a [nomination form](#). Please submit the completed nomination form by **April 3** to: registrations@soiowa.org or to Rhonda Schwarzkopf at Special Olympics Iowa, PO Box 620, Grimes, IA 50111. One additional page of supporting documentation may be included.

Check out our [Annual Awards](#) webpage for more details.

Attention All Coaches!

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

Check out our new "Become a Coach" page:
<http://www.soiowa.org/get-involved/become-a-coach/>

You can now become certified/re-certified ONLINE in the following sports:

- Athletics (Track & Field)
- Basketball Skills & Team Basketball
- Bocce
- Bowling
- Cheerleading & Dance
- Cycling
- Swimming
- Volleyball

*More sports to be offered soon.

ONLINE
TRAINING



Register for the Iowa Law Enforcement Half Marathon/5k

Whether you're running for fun or running towards a goal, everyone who participates in the Iowa Law Enforcement Half Marathon & 5k event is running for a dream - the dream of a

Special Olympics Iowa (SOIA) athlete. This is a great opportunity for individuals and organizations to raise money and support SOIA athletes.

Event Details

Date: Saturday, April 22nd, 2017

Location: Banner Lakes at Summerset Park, Carlisle

[REGISTER NOW](#)

[More Information](#)



Upcoming Polar Plunge Dates!

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.

Check out these upcoming Plunge Dates:

[Cedar Rapids/ Iowa City](#)

Date: March 25

Location: Coralville Lake

[Council Bluffs](#)

Date: March 25

Location: Lake Manawa

[Ames Greek Plunge](#)

Date: March 31

Location: TBA

[Cedar Falls/Waterloo](#)

Date: April 8

Location: George Wyth State Park

[Fairfield](#)

Date: April 22

Location: Waterworks Park Beach

[Ottumwa](#)

Date: April 29

Location: Jimmy Jones Shelter

[Northwest Iowa](#)

Date: April 29

Location: Schamberg Park



Head to www.soioa.org/plunge to get registered to plunge today!

A special thanks to our statewide
Polar Plunge sponsor:



2018 Special Olympics USA Games Info

The 2018 Special Olympics USA Games will be held in Seattle, WA July 1-6. Special Olympics Iowa is now accepting general applications for both athletes and coaches.

Athletes and coaches interested in applying for the USA Games are to submit completed applications to registrations@soiowa.org by 06/01/2017.

Please direct any questions regarding the USA Games to Rhonda Schwarzkopf at rschwarzkopf@soiowa.org.

[2018 Special Olympics USA Games Application](#)

Coaches Corner

Coaches' Guide Available Online!

It can be found under the "Competitions" tab on the homepage or at this [link](#).

Basketball Skills Competition Change

In the 10 Meter Speed Dribble Event the width of the lane has been changed from 1.5 meters to 2 meters.

Harlan Coaches Sports Training Certification Clinic

The Harlan Coaches Sports Training Certification Clinic scheduled for January, 16th at Harlan High School was **CANCELLED** due to weather. The clinic has been rescheduled for March 27th.

Updated info for the clinic:

Harlan High School
2102 Durant, Harlan, IA 51537
March 27, 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Sport certifications offered: bocce, bowling, basketball, athletics, cheer/dance, softball, cycling

Basketball Skills Venue Change for Mid-Winter Tournament

There has been a venue change for the Special Olympics Iowa Mid-Winter Tournament, March 10-11 in Iowa City.

Basketball skills will now be conducted in the Main Gym of Iowa City High School located at 1900 Morningside Drive.

Please make sure your athletes are in the staging area, in the auxiliary gym at Iowa City High School, at the appropriate time for their competition with their name tags on the front of their shirts.

Calendar Highlights

For a full listing of events, visit [our online calendar!](#)



March

- 1- Spread the Word to End the Word Day
- 4- Des Moines Challenge Day
- 5- Northeast Spring Games: Track & Field and Aquatics
- 7- NAIA National Basketball Tournament- Special Olympics Basketball Clinic
- 10-11- Mid-Winter Tournament
- 11- Southeast Area Swimming
- 12- Special Olympics Day at Iowa Energy Game
- 16- North Area Swimming
- 25- East Central Area Swimming
- 25- Cedar Rapids/ Iowa City Plunge
- 25- Council Bluffs Plunge
- 27- Harlan Coaches Sports Training Certification Clinic
- 31- Ames Greek Plunge

April

- 1- Cedar Falls Challenge Day
- 1- East Central Area Spring Games
- 6- North Area Spring Games
- 8- Southeast Area Spring Games
- 8- East Area Spring Games
- 8- Central Area Spring Games
- 8- South Central Area Spring Games
- 8- Cedar Falls/ Waterloo Plunge
- 11- Southwest Area Spring Games
- 12- Cedar Rapids Play Day
- 18- West Central Area Spring Games
- 18- West Central Area Swimming
- 20- North Central Area Spring Games
- 20- Ankeny Play Day
- 22- Youth Games
- 22- Cornell University Unified Day
- 22- LETR Half Marathon
- 22- Northwest Area Spring Games
- 22- Fairfield Polar Plunge
- 27- River Hills Play Day
- 29- Ottumwa Plunge
- 29- Northwest Iowa Polar Plunge

May

- 4- Drake Unified Sports Day
 - 25-27- 2017 Summer Games
-

Thank You to Our Partners!

Champion Statewide Partners



Premier Statewide Partners



Special Olympics Iowa | 515-986-5520 | www.soiowa.org
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