

February 2015

Newsletter

Special
Olympics
Iowa



A Message from SOIA's New CEO, Gary Harms

I am humbled, excited and proud to be the newly named leader of Special Olympics Iowa. I feel very blessed to have been chosen to join the organization and to continue to make new friends among all of you who are involved in that which we are all so passionate about.

Please know that I want to meet all of you, and I want to hear from you; I'm not foolish enough to promise that something like that can or will happen in the immediate future, but I would ask that if you see me at an event, or at the mall, or the grocery store or wherever, if you recognize me and I don't see you, stop me and introduce yourself.

You are all now a part of my extended family; I'll do my best to honor you by doing what is right for our athlete citizens.

I don't intend to be a "desk rider;" I started out as a Summer Games volunteer 25-plus years ago, and fully intend to continue to be a part of our events as more than just a hand shaker and a speaker, because at heart, I really enjoy the high fives, smiles and genuine happiness that all of our athlete friends share with us all the time.

We are going to continue to look for ways to expand opportunities for athletes to compete, train and be included in aspects of life beyond the athletic fields. We are going to continue to try to get more people



involved in the movement through education and communication. We are going to continue to allay fears and help those who have never experienced the joy of volunteering at an event to understand how it touches the heart—and how much more they receive than they can ever hope to give as a volunteer.

We are going to do all this and more with one thing in mind – and that is to make every decision with the athlete as our primary focus and to do what is best for our friends with intellectual disabilities (as well as their friends, families and other supporters).

I thank you in advance for what you will do for our athlete citizens, what you've all done in the past, and urge you to continue to talk with your friends, neighbors, co-workers, fellow church-goers and whomever else, and convince just one of them to volunteer at an event. If each of you does that, imagine the possibilities, opportunities and the additional awareness that we can create for individuals with intellectual disabilities in the state of Iowa.

Thank you once again for this wonderful opportunity.

Sincerely, and humbly yours,

Gary D. Harms

Proud President/CEO – Special Olympics Iowa

Pizza Deliveries Inspire More Than 20 Years of Volunteering

By Sarah Mauch

It all started out with delivering pizzas. At a young age of just eight years old, a young boy and his father began delivering pizzas to events held for Special Olympics Iowa.

Matt Goedken, now 33, and his father volunteered to deliver pizzas for athletes participating in the Special Olympics. When his father stepped down, he then took over for him and now has been working for Special Olympics Iowa and the Winter Games Committee for over two decades.



Volunteer Matt Goedken with Olaf at Sundown Mountain.

Goedken is an assistant games director along with six other people, working the Alpine Slope at Sundown Mountain Resort for the annual Special Olympics Iowa Winter Games. His job is to make sure that the athletes are where they are supposed to be for their competition and that they are at the right hills. He helps coordinate events and makes sure everything is running smoothly for the Winter Games.

Goedken has been volunteering for Special Olympics Iowa for about 25 years and now has a position doing something that he loves. When asked what his favorite part about volunteering is, he said he loves to watch the athletes make improvements.

“It’s awesome being able to watch the athletes start out on the small slopes and then eventually progress to the big hill,” says Goedken.

For Goedken, this is a great feeling. Seeing the athletes progress and working with the kids is something he really enjoys doing and it is one of his favorite things about volunteering. He loves being able to help the athletes accomplish their dreams.

SOIA Welcomes New East Central Area Director

Katherine Shelor joins the Special Olympics Iowa team this month, coming on board as the East Central Area Director.

Katie has been a coach with the City of Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation Department for eight years. She has coached both volleyball and cheerleading. Katie also assists with many local and area fundraising events and management teams. She works as an engineer at Rockwell Collins and enjoys spending time with her boyfriend and fellow CR coach, Tim, dog named Muppet, and cat named Cami. Katie enjoys being immersed in the excitement of Special Olympics competitions.

“The athletes work so hard during practice — so it is very fulfilling to see the joy it brings them when they get to show off what they have learned,” Katie said.

You can reach Katie Shelor at ECAreaSO@gmail.com. Welcome aboard, Katie!

Golden Rule ♥’s Special Olympics Iowa

Golden Rule Plumbing, Heating, and Cooling is teaming up with Special Olympics Iowa for a special Valentine’s Day treat.

From February 1-14, Golden Rule will donate ALL of the proceeds from new Gold Club Memberships to Special Olympics Iowa! Gold Memberships are \$99 plus tax and include an AC check-up in the spring, a furnace check-up in the fall, a plumbing check-up, 10% off any repairs, and no trip charges.

Call Golden Rule from February 1-14 at 515-243-7152 to become a Gold Club Member and support your local Special Olympics athletes!

A promotional graphic for Golden Rule Plumbing, Heating, and Cooling. It features a yellow background with a red ribbon that says "GOLDEN Rule" in yellow and red text. Below the ribbon, the services "Plumbing", "Heating", "Cooling", and "Geothermal" are listed in a light blue font. At the bottom, the phone number "515-243-7152" is displayed in large, bold, black text.

Alliant Energy Foundation Support Unified Sports



The Alliant Energy Foundation has provided a \$2,500 grant to Special Olympics Iowa to support Unified Sports in 2015!

During the grant period, more than 2,000 athletes and partners, and 335 volunteers, will participate in Unified Sports in areas where Alliant Energy operates.

Unified Sports is an ongoing initiative that partners Special Olympics Iowa athletes and athletes without intellectual disabilities on the same team for training and competition. Age and ability matching of athletes and partners is assigned on a sport-by-sport basis.

Throughout the year, in a variety of sports ranging from basketball and golf, to bowling and figure skating, athletes improve physical fitness, sharpen skills and challenge the competition. This program is one of the most effective tools to increase inclusion in communities.

The concept was introduced in the mid-1980s to provide another level of challenge for athletes and to promote equality and inclusion. Today, the initiative has a presence at virtually all Special Olympics sports competitions.

The Alliant Energy Foundation commits its time and resources to help make our communities better places to live and work. The foundation works to help improve the quality of life by giving back to communities it serves in Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin.

The foundation was launched in 1998 and has contributed more than \$46 million to projects and organizations through a variety of programs and worthwhile initiatives. The foundation's programs reflect a commitment to play an active role in communities it serves through volunteerism and financial support.

For more information about the foundation, please visit <http://www.alliantenergy.com/CommunityInvolvement/CharitableFoundation/>

Polar Plungers Across the State are Freezin' for a Reason

2014 proved to be another successful year of Polar Plunges and we couldn't be more thankful for the sponsors, donors, team members and volunteers that contributed, raised money and sacrificed their time.

Together we've raised nearly \$350,000 for Iowa athletes, giving them opportunities to participate in year-round sports, health and educational programming — and most importantly — experience joy, pride and respect.

Support Special Olympics Iowa by joining the fun of the Polar Plunge in 2015. In addition to our existing Polar Plunge locations, we are excited to announce that new for 2015 we will be hosting a plunge in Ottumwa! Gather your team and register for a Polar Plunge near you - It's the Coolest Thing You'll Do All Year!

February 28	Warren County, Lake Ahquabi
March 21	Council Bluffs, Lake Manawa
March 28	Ottumwa, Jimmy Jones Shelter
April 11	Cedar Rapids, Pleasant Creek
April 11	Iowa City, Coralville Lake
April 17	Iowa City Greek Plunge, Coralville Lake
April 18	Cedar Falls/Waterloo, George Wyth
April 25	Northwest Iowa, Scharnberg Park

For more information and to register, visit:
www.soiowa.org/plunge

Freezin' For A Reason



Hy-Vee Dietitians Promote Nutritious Choices at Winter Games

Nutrition is important to the success of all athletes, giving them the energy to put forth their best performance. During the 2015 Winter Games, Dubuque Hy-Vee dietitians Megan Horstman and Brian Scheil visited with athletes about making good food choices.

Hy-Vee has been a valued Statewide Partner with Special Olympics Iowa for many years. Featuring the local Hy-Vee dietitians at Winter Games quickly became a popular addition to the event.



To put a fun spin on their visit, Horstman and Scheil played the NuVal wheel game with athletes. NuVal is a nutritional scoring system Hy-Vee has in place to help shoppers buy healthier foods. It scores food on a scale from 1 to 100. The higher the NuVal Score, the higher the nutritional value. Athletes spun the NuVal color wheel, waited to see what color they

landed on and then went to the coordinating color station. Each station had a choice between a healthy item and an unhealthy item.

“Athletes were to choose which is the healthier item,” explained Horstman. “For example on the light green station there was a choice between the kiwi or a Mountain Dew.”

Making the right food choices is just one aspect of a healthy lifestyle. The top three nutrition tips Horstman and Scheil shared were:

1. Start the day off right with breakfast. Make sure it is well balanced and includes a carbohydrate, protein and healthy fat.
2. Drink plenty of water. Hydration is key to keep you at your peak performance.
3. Eat a variety of fruits and vegetables. Choose a variety of color to get all of the important vitamins and minerals your body needs.

Above all, they stressed to do your best to avoid sugar.

“Always have a fruit as a snack and try not to have the sugary option as often,” said Scheil. “We generally know what the healthier option is, but often just need some encouragement to make the right choice.”

Do Your Part to Spread the Word March 3

Spread the Word to End the Word is an ongoing effort by Special Olympics, Best Buddies and our supporters to inspire respect and acceptance through raising the consciousness of society about the R-word and how hurtful words and disrespect can be toward people with intellectual disabilities.

The campaign, created by youth, is intended to engage schools, organizations and communities to rally and pledge their support at www.r-word.org and to promote the inclusion and acceptance of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Join Special Olympics Iowa and Best Buddies Iowa for awareness day at the Iowa State Capitol:

Tuesday, March 3
9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Iowa State Capitol Building, First Floor Rotunda

Visit www.r-word.org to learn how you can Spread the Word to End the Word.

**PLEDGE
TO SHOW
RESPECT
TO EVERYONE**
R-word.org

OnnaLee Lights Up the Ice Rink

By Shelby Howard

OnnaLee Miller of Ames can light up a room with just her bright, cheery laugh. A figure skater for Special Olympics Iowa for the last two years, OnnaLee works hard at least twice a week to grow as an athlete which helped in achieving her success during the Winter Games in Dubuque.

However, for OnnaLee, being a skater does not come without sacrifice. She used to participate in track, but gave it up to perform in the spring skate show. Aside from her showcases and performances, OnnaLee spends a lot of time in the rink. She takes lessons once a week as well as assisting with lessons, but spends much more time on the ice in the weeks leading up to a competition.

OnnaLee has a few coaches that help her with skills, but choreography is something she does on her own. With eight years of figure skating experience, OnnaLee has no shortage of ideas for her routines. For the Winter Games, she had to cut minutes off of her routine because it was so long.

According to her mother, Beth Miller, "Ice skating is totally her thing. It's her comfort zone, and she will engage with other people on the ice that otherwise she might not do."

During the Winter Games, OnnaLee got the chance to compete in front of a large audience comprised mostly of children from a local elementary school. OnnaLee said, "At first it was kind of scary; they were so loud!" Luckily, she had the opportunity to practice in front of an audience at the winter skate show.

OnnaLee shines in her skating, and even with all of the effort she devotes to it, she still has time to participate in other sports throughout the year. Cheerleading is one of her favorites, and she greatly looks forward to competing with her friends in Iowa City for the Mid-Winter Tournament. She also plays volleyball, coached by her mother. Aside from athletic activities, OnnaLee is a talented knitter, showing off a scarf on which she is currently working.

Beth perfectly summed up what it means to be a Special Olympics athlete. "It's a competitive environment where it's OK to cheer for your opponents." And speaking in regards to her daughter she went on to say, "She is just so naturally good at cheering other people on."

In one word, Beth described OnnaLee as inspiring. "She doesn't let anybody or anything make her think she can't do something. Don't tell her she can't do it' she'll just decide for herself that she will."



Gymnastics Reinstated for Mid-Winter Tournament

Mid-Winter Tournament

March 14

**Univ. of Iowa Campus, Iowa City
Registration Deadline: Feb. 20**

Special Olympics Iowa has decided, after further review and discussion, to reinstate gymnastics competition as part of the Mid-Winter Tournament for 2015.

Gymnastics registration forms are available at www.soiowa.org, but please be aware that there are other forms from the Mid-Winter Tournament registration packet that must be submitted for gymnastics athletes to be fully registered.

Due to the low number of athletes currently training and competing in gymnastics our staff will be conducting a review over the course of the next year to determine the competition status of gymnastics for 2016 and beyond using a soon to be defined set of criteria for the addition or removal of sports from state competition status.

This review process document, when completed, will be available to all delegations for their review via our website and will apply not only to gymnastics, but to all sports offered by Special Olympics Iowa. The review criteria will also be shared directly with those delegations with athletes participating in sports under review for changes in state competition status.

How Project UNIFY Has Changed Me

By Peyton Maulsby, Bondurant High School Freshman

I was never involved with Special Olympics until late summer of 2014. I had always heard about it, but never became a part of it. But when I heard about their Youth Activation Committee, I instantly decided that it was time to join the community.

Filling out the application, I was ecstatic to start the program. I remember feeling so nervous about whether I would be accepted or not. After a while, I found out that I was accepted into the state-wide group that would start to influence my life. That may sound cliché, but it's true; being a part of something this important helped me to see all of the problems around me that I never noticed before or thought were insignificant.

I attended the first meeting of this committee in December 2014. Although there was no one there who I knew, I felt an incredible sense of trust and community. This meeting was the first "class" I attended in which no one was a student, but at the same time everyone was a student. I was a bit of a unique member because my school doesn't have Project Unify, but I wasn't the only one who learned something new. I was a member, but I was also a teacher. A leader.

Throughout the day, I learned more about my own style of leadership, the components of leadership, the importance of working with others, as well as many more things. Some things that I learned are things that I can't even pin down, for they were more a feeling or a sense than a concrete lesson. I was able to lead an activity in an impromptu fashion, which I loved doing. I met young people from all over the state who I know are and will be amazing leaders and friends.

We learned that throughout the year, each member would be doing an individual project. Mine will be a rather large task; I'm in the process of creating a school-wide Youth Activation Committee. I'm excited to see where this will lead me and the other people in my community. Perhaps this project will bring more awareness to the people in the area. I certainly hope so; I'd love to see others going through the same feelings that I am.

By joining this aspect of Special Olympics, I feel that I've become a better and more educated person. I now know more about inclusion and leadership than I ever could have hoped for, and it's only been a month! In the next several months as well as the beyond, I know that I will continue to grow as a person with the influence of

this program. This program inspires me to make a change and take a stand, which I probably would have been too doubtful or shy to otherwise do.

This program, the people in it, the athletes, and the entire community are so empowering. All I can say is that the impact of Special Olympics will linger around long after it's gone. If one day the organization were to end, the message and feeling of it will stay here, engraved on all who have been touched by it. I've never in my life experienced something more worthwhile than spending your time bettering yourself through Special Olympics.

I used to think that Special Olympics programs were only for those with intellectual and/or physical disabilities. I have never been more wrong in my life. Reading about all of the programs, there is such diversity there that you won't find in many other places. I honestly don't know where I'd be without this program, probably living in ignorance.

And these are the many reasons why I'm proud to be a part of this wonderful and beautiful community. I can't wait to see what the future of this program holds.

Iowa State Patrol Half Marathon/10K/5K Set for April 19



Come get your run on at the 2015 Iowa State Patrol Half Marathon on Sunday, April 19! Runners and walkers of all skill levels are invited to participate in the half marathon, which also includes a 10k and 5k.

For more information and to register visit www.soiowa.org/marathon. Discounted registration fees are available for participants who sign up early!

Special Olympics Iowa Calendar of Events

February

7	Southeast Area Basketball Skills	Burlington
7	Northeast Area Basketball Skills	Cedar Falls
7	Southwest Conference Team Basketball	Sioux City
12	Central Area Basketball Skills	Marshalltown
12	North Central Area Basketball Skills	Fort Dodge
14	West Central Conference Team Basketball	Des Moines
14	Unified Sports Day	Waverly
17	Southwest Area Bocce	Council Bluffs
19	Young Athlete Play Day	Oskaloosa
21	East Central Conference Team Basketball	Cedar Rapids
28	East Area Aquatics	Muscatine
28	South Central Area Bocce Invitational	Atlantic

March

5	Young Athlete Play Day	Des Moines
7	Southeast Area Aquatics	Ottumwa
8	Northeast Area Spring Games & Aquatics	Cedar Falls
14	Mid-Winter Tournament	University of Iowa, Iowa City
21	Challenge Day	Dubuque
28	East Central Area Aquatics	Cedar Rapids
28	Challenge Day	Des Moines
28	Unified Sports Day	Avoca
31	North Area Aquatics	Spirit Lake

April

4	Unified Sports Day	Grinnell
7	West Central Area Aquatics & Spring Games	Indianola (2 locations)
9	North Central Area Spring Games	Fort Dodge
9	Young Athletes Play Day	Cedar Rapids
11	Area Spring Games	Marshalltown, Cedar Rapids, Eldridge Sioux Center, Lamoni, Mt. Pleasant
11	Challenge Day	Cedar Falls
14	North Area Spring Games	Spirit Lake
14	Southwest Area Spring Games	Council Bluffs
16	Young Athletes Play Day	Ankeny

May

7	Unified Sports Day	Drake University, Des Moines
16	Gourmet Gala (fundraiser - call to register)	Seasons at Iowa State University, Ames
21-23	Summer Games	Iowa State University, Ames

Connect With Us!

Remember to follow Special Olympics Iowa to receive important updates and stay on top of the latest events and activities.

Be Our Twitter Reporter!

Training for a competition? Volunteering at an event? Having a great time at a fundraiser? Let us know about it! Tag your tweets with @soiowa and we will retweet you!



Facebook at www.facebook.com/SpecialOlympicsIA

Twitter at @SOIowa

Instagram at www.instagram.com/SpecialOlympicsIA

YouTube at www.youtube.com/soiowa2



Special Olympics Iowa

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