

May 2015

Newsletter

Special
Olympics
Iowa



Ames and Iowa State Welcome Athletes, Volunteers for 31st Annual Summer Games

More than 2,600 athletes, 1,200 coaches and 2,000 volunteers are set to converge on the campus of Iowa State University for the 31st Annual Special Olympics Iowa Summer Games May 21-23. Events begin Thurs., May 21 with the Torch Run Final Leg bringing the Flame of Hope from Nollen Plaza in downtown Des Moines to Hilton Coliseum for the Opening Ceremony presented by Hy-Vee beginning at 7 p.m.



Competition will begin Thurs., May 21 at 8:30 a.m. with tennis singles matches and individual skills at the Forker Tennis Courts. Cycling, team bocce, soccer and race walk competitions will also take place that day. Singles bocce, tennis doubles, aquatics, athletics (track and field) and developmental events will take place on Fri., May 22 with athletics competition continuing through Sat., May 23.

"Youth and adult athletes across the state have been training all year to prepare for the Summer Games," said Special Olympics Iowa CEO Gary Harms. "This is their opportunity to compete, engage with friends and families, and be proud of their performances in an atmosphere of inclusion and acceptance. As they have for so many years, the people of Ames and Iowa State University

open their arms, their facilities, their city and, most importantly, their hearts, in doing a tremendous job of hosting and welcoming our athletes."

Also featured at the games is an Olympic Festival, which is an area for athletes to relax between competitions and interact with sponsors and partners through games and activities.

The Olympic Festival will be located on the south side of the Lied Recreation Athletic Center parking lot.



Healthy Athletes screenings will also be provided to athletes by health-care professionals for eyesight,

dental, hearing, overall health and fitness and more. At more than 1.4 million free health examinations in more than 120 countries, the Special Olympics Healthy Athletes program has become the largest global public health organization dedicated to serving people with intellectual disabilities.

Sponsors for the 2015 Summer Games include Hy-Vee, Sammons Financial Group, Wells Fargo, Ames Chamber and Economic Development, Barilla, Beisser Lumber, B-Bops – Ames, Danfoss, Iowa Cheerleading Coaches' Association, Kingland Systems, Mary Greeley Medical Center, McFarland Clinic, UnitedHealthcare and U.S. Bank.

Carry the Flame of Hope in the Unified Relay Across America!

Registration is open for the first-ever Special Olympics Unified Relay Across America presented by Bank of America. The Unified Relay will give anyone in the country a chance to carry the Flame of Hope that will be lit in Athens, Greece and help deliver it to Los Angeles for the Special Olympics World Games.

Over the course of 46 days, in a hand-to-hand exchange, over 20,000 participants will run, walk or bike a segment of the relay in this team and individual fundraising event as it passes through all 50 states. The relay will be in Iowa from June 12-14, covering 213 miles with overnight stays in Des Moines and Ames.

Each torchbearer has the opportunity to walk, jog, run or roll a half-mile segment or bicycle a five-mile segment. Register today at www.unifiedrelay.org!

HOW DO I GET INVOLVED?

1

REGISTER YOURSELF OR A TEAM

www.unifiedrelay.org

You can carry the torch yourself or bring up to 15 of your friends and coworkers.

2

SELECT A DATE

The Unified Relay will be in Iowa from June 12-14, covering 213 miles.

- June 12 Bloomfield - Ottumwa - Oskaloosa - Prairie City - Pleasant Hill - Des Moines
- June 13 Des Moines - Urbandale - Ankeny - Huxley - Ames
- June 14 Ames - Boone - Jefferson - Atlantic - Council Bluffs

3

CHOOSE A SEGMENT

You or your team can run/walk a 1/2 mile segment or bike a 5 mile segment.

4

ENGAGE

Contact your friends, family, company, coworkers and community to raise funds and join the spirit of the Unified Relay. A minimum fundraising goal of \$1,000 per regular segment per team or \$2,500 per premium segment per team. Reach \$1,500 and you get to keep your torch!

Iowa State Greeks Set SOIA Fundraising Record

Iowa State University students set a fundraising record of \$190,000 as they dove into the State Gym pool for the Ames Greek Polar Plunge for Special Olympics Iowa March 28. More than 2,700 students combined efforts to raise the most money ever at a single event for Special Olympics Iowa.

The previous fundraising record was \$127,000 set at Over the Edge for Special Olympics Iowa in Sept. 2010.



"We had such a great time in Ames and were very impressed by the enthusiasm the Cyclones had for the Plunge" said Jeanette Steinfeldt, SOIA director of development. "Even after the event was over, the students never stopped the fundraising, bringing in donations days later. Their efforts will go a long way in helping individuals with intellectual disabilities in Iowa."

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 plunging into frigid waters.

Want to join in on the fun? Polar Plunges are scheduled throughout the state of Iowa, including Cedar Falls/Waterloo on April 18 and Northwest Iowa on April 25. To find a Polar Plunge in your area and to register, visit www.soiowa.org/plunge.

Hodson Begins Role as Athlete Rep on SOIA Board of Directors



By Sarah Mauch

Charity Hodson, a 32-year-old Special Olympics Iowa athlete, has been chosen to be this year's athlete representative on the SOIA Board of Directors. She participates in cheerleading, track, softball and bowling. Hodson has participated in Special Olympics on and off since first grade.

"I have learned something over the years. In life, others may be mean to you, but don't listen to them. YOU ARE A WINNER JUST LIKE ME!"

Charity Hodson, new athlete representative on the SOIA Board, pictured at the 2014 Plane Pull.

Participating in Special Olympics has made her feel like she belongs. Before joining Special Olympics, the kids in her elementary physical education classes would exclude her from activities. With the help of Special Olympics, she has come a long way. She now loves sports and in 1999 she was chosen to compete in the World Games in Raleigh, N.C. One of her favorite memories from the World Games was being able to meet all the different athletes from around the world.

"Earning my gold medal at the end was quite an honor," said Hodson. Special Olympics has given her an opportunity to meet other athletes with intellectual disabilities from all around the world and this is something which she is forever thankful. "I was amazed that we got along so well and, by the time it was all over, we felt like family."

Summer Games Committee Boasts More Than 400 Combined Years of Service to SOIA

With the focus on the more than 2,600 athletes competing at the 2015 Summer Games in Ames and the fact that the events seem to run like a fine Swiss watch, it is easy to overlook the tremendous effort and enormous number of hours that go into making an event this large run smoothly.

The Summer Games Committee, made up of nearly 40 dedicated individuals with more than 400 years of combined service, works tirelessly months in advance to make sure athletes, coaches, other volunteers and fans enjoy their time at Summer Games. They represent not only the city of Ames and Iowa State University, but many other organizations and service clubs in the Ames community. Without the hard work and dedication of the members of this committee, the Summer Games could not have grown into the wonderful event it is today.



"The beauty of our planning committee is that we not only have the historical information, but we are very steady," said Jan Williams, Summer Games Committee co-chair. "With such low turnover, it only helps to hit home and solidify the fact that we have a great team of individuals pulling together to make a great three-day event."

The city of Ames and Iowa State University have hosted Summer Games for 31 years, and many of the committee members have been involved since the very first year. This devoted group of individuals sacrifice time and effort, working in tandem with numerous divisions across the campus and city during the planning process — facilities use, residence and dining, information stations, medical assistance, sports clinics and schedules with the ISU athletics department.

If you see a member of the Summer Games Committee this year, make sure and stop them to say thank you for all of the hard work and dedication they have put in to making the Summer Games a success for the past 30 years! They will be the folks running from venue to venue — with huge smiles on their faces.

UnitedHealthcare Joins SOIA Movement as a Gold Level Sponsor

Special Olympics Iowa and UnitedHealthcare have launched a partnership to help address health and wellness among athletes across Iowa. UnitedHealthcare has generously provided \$10,000 to support Healthy Athletes and Challenge Days!

Health has a substantial impact on the quality of life for people with intellectual disabilities and can significantly affect an athlete's ability to train and compete in sports effectively. To address this, SOIA has made health a cornerstone of its programming. Through the Healthy Athletes program, medical professionals provide free screenings to improve greater overall health of athletes.

Unique to Iowa, Challenge Days are held throughout the year and are designed to provide opportunities for athletes with severe and profound disabilities to compete. Challenge Day programs are one-day events designed to provide meaningful competition for adults

and children with severe and profound intellectual disabilities. They consist of various activities during which participants may take part as a team or individually in sports such as wheelchair basketball, volleyball, ball darts, dice bowling, ramp bowling, and much more, all with the aid of switch-activated equipment. Since the athletes live in care facilities and therefore have limited mobility, SOIA brings the competition to them. Challenge Days are held eight times a year in the following communities: Cedar Falls, Coralville, Council Bluffs/Glenwood, Davenport, Des Moines, Dubuque, and Lake City/Carroll.

UnitedHealthcare is dedicated to helping people nationwide live healthier lives by simplifying the

Community Plan

health care experience, meeting consumer health and wellness needs, and sustaining trusted relationships with care providers. The company offers the full spectrum of health benefit programs for individuals, employers, military service members, retirees and their families, and Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries, and contracts directly with more than 850,000 physicians and care professionals, and 6,000 hospitals and other care facilities nationwide. Globally, UnitedHealthcare serves 45 million people in health benefits and is one of the businesses of UnitedHealth Group (NYSE: UNH), a diversified Fortune 50 health and well-being company. For more information, visit UnitedHealthcare at www.uhc.com or follow @myUHC on Twitter.

PULL for Special Olympics Iowa!



Strong enough to pull a plane? Prove it! The Rasmussen Group and the Lohse Family Foundation present the second annual Plane Pull benefiting Special Olympics Iowa! Join us June 6 at the Des Moines International Airport and pull for a purpose.

It's a giant tug of war between you, your friends and a 120,000-pound airplane! The Plane Pull is a unique opportunity for individuals and organizations to raise money and support SOIA athletes by pulling a UPS 757. Round up 20 of your friends and coworkers, raise a minimum of \$1,000 and get ready to test your strength.

In 2014, sponsors and participants of the Plane Pull raised more than \$105,000 for Iowa athletes, giving them opportunities to participate in year-round sports, health and educational programming — and most importantly — experience joy, pride and respect.

For more information and to get registered, visit www.soiowa.org/planepull

Beisser Lumber Makes Bocce Happen at Summer Games

By Shelby Howard

Beisser Lumber is a full-service lumberyard that was founded in Iowa in 1953, and they have been a big supporter of Special Olympics Iowa. Last year, Kim Beisser donated the lumber and supplies needed to build five new award stands that are used during the Summer Games in Ames.

For the last several years, Beisser Lumber has also provided lumber for the Special Olympics Iowa Drake Unified Sports Day bocce venue as well as the Summer Games bocce venue. Beisser delivers and picks up the lumber at no cost.

When it comes to our athletes and events, many organizations and individuals donate food, beverages, volunteers or funding, but Special Olympics Iowa is a very diverse organization that needs other commodities as well. Thank you to Beisser Lumber for donating an often over-looked necessity for our athletes, and we greatly look forward to our ongoing partnership.



Koele Retires After 38 Years with Special Olympics Iowa

Special Olympics Iowa is known throughout the state to have dedicated and loyal volunteers who serve as leaders for the organization. Peggy Koele, the northwest area director, is certainly no exception. For more than 38 years, Koele has faithfully supported the Special Olympics movement while making a tremendous impact on local Special Olympics delegations and their communities.



Peggy was first introduced to Special Olympics in 1977, when she accompanied a Hope Haven student to a Special Olympics event. Peggy spends time teaching the students how to participate and excel in basketball, bowling and track and field.

"I love to watch the effort they put into competing," she said. "They put their whole heart into it." Her favorite athletics event is the 4X100 meter relay, because "four athletes have to work together and encourage one another."

Koele's accomplishments as a Special Olympics Iowa volunteer are truly amazing. Peggy fulfilled the role of area director for 20 years, served as the 2006 Special Olympics USA Games Bowling Sports Commissioner and continues to coach students and serve as the program manager for the Rock Valley School District. As the area director, Peggy ensured that quality Special Olympics sports training programs and athletic competitions were available to all eligible individuals in the area. She planned, implemented and managed all area competitions while raising funds to support and meet the financial needs of the area. Peggy also recruited, orientated and trained volunteers, including husband Glenn and sons Gregg and Garry, who assisted with the sports competitions held in the area. Key volunteers return event after event to support the athletes and their families while showing appreciation for Koele's guidance and direction.

Throughout the year, Koele emphasizes the importance of athletes training and competing year round to develop physically, gain self-confidence and reach their full potential while developing team spirit. She continues to serve as a mentor for countless Special Olympics athletes and volunteers.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and the state office staff, sincere thanks go to Koele for her leadership, management and dedication to Special Olympics Iowa. Her commitment to the athletes will serve as a role model to future volunteers and coaches.

FIT Focus: Expanding to a Delegation Near You!

It is with great excitement that we announce expansion of our FIT Program! We recently received a generous grant from Special Olympics North America and Finish Line to roll out FIT and Fitness Assessment Testing to an additional 30 delegations/300 athletes.

FIT Program Requirements:

- Register your delegation by emailing FIT@soiowa.org
- Pre- and Post-Fitness Assessment Testing during fall 2015 and spring 2016 sports seasons
- Submission of FIT Assessment data

FIT Program Benefits:

- FREE Coach Assessment Kits and FIT Coaching Guidebooks
- Incentives for completion of pre- and post-testing
- Improved athletic performance and overall health!

To sign up or for more information, contact Adrienne Johnson, eastern regional director, at FIT@soiowa.org or check out our FITness Assessment Testing tent by the Olympic Village during Summer Games.



Sat., May 16 in Des Moines

Join us for the first annual Run with the Police! The race will begin at 10:30 a.m. starting in the 100 blk. of E. Court Avenue right outside of the Des Moines Police Station, and finishing back at the station. This is a timed 5K race/run/walk event which benefits Special Olympics Iowa and also recognizes National Police Week.

Registration is open until midnight on May 13. Pre-registration is \$20 and registration on the day of the race is \$30.

So, Run WITH the Police for a fun day and a worthy cause! More information at <http://www.dmgov.org/departments/Police/Pages/RunWithPolice.aspx>

Ankeny Play Day Sponsored by Sammons Introduces Youth to Special Olympics

Two Young Athletes Play Day sessions sponsored by Sammons Financial Group were held at Ankeny Centennial High School on April 16. The program designed to provide play activities and socialization opportunities for children with intellectual disabilities between the ages of two and seven.



425 children, increased from 300 participants in 2014, participated in activities including ball darts, basketball, batting, bowling, 25-foot dash, musical balance beam, obstacle course, ribbon routine, soccer kick, standing long jump and tennis ball throw.

More than 300 volunteers from Sammons Financial Group, Ankeny High School, Ankeny Centennial High School and Northview Middle School ran each event and work as team leaders.

Papa Murphy's
TAKE 'N BAKE PIZZA

we will
DONATE \$1
to Special Olympics Iowa
for each \$9 Heartbaker® Pizza
sold on May 9th & 10th

Special Olympics Iowa

You'll also have an opportunity to purchase Peel-A-Deal Cards from local Special Olympians to support the Iowa Special Olympics

Special Olympics Iowa Calendar of Events

May		
7	Unified Sports Day	Drake University, Des Moines
16	Gourmet Gala (fundraiser - call to register)	Seasons Marketplace, Iowa State University, Ames
21-23	Summer Games	Iowa State University, Ames
June		
6	Plane Pull	Des Moines International Airport
13	Challenge Day	Lake City
July		
10	Softball Skills Competition	Atlantic
11	Softball Conference Tournament	Des Moines
11	Softball Skills Competition	Muscatine
18	Softball Conference Tournament	Cedar Rapids
August		
8	State Softball	Ankeny
September		
12	State Equestrian Meet	Iowa State University
16	Over the Edge	Des Moines
26	World's Largest Truck Convoy	Des Moines
October		
3	State Flag Football (tentative)	Cedar Rapids
10	State Volleyball Tournament	Iowa State University
November		
7	Des Moines Polar Plunge	Jordan Creek Town Center
21	State Bowling Tournament	Sioux City Des Moines, Cedar Rapids

SOIA Adventureland Weekend is May 23-24!

Athletes who visit Adventureland on Sat., May 23 or Sun., May 24 will receive FREE admission to Adventureland by wearing a medal or a ribbon from the 2015 Summer Games! Adventureland discount coupons for family, coaches and friends will be available during the Summer Games at the Lied Recreation Center information booth. Each coupon allows up to six individuals a special discount price of \$25 per person (tax included). That is a savings of \$15 off the regular admission price, and a portion of the proceeds from each ticket sale will be donated to SOIA. Adventureland is open from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Saturday. The ticket is also valid to use at the Adventure Bay Water Park which is open from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. For more information contact Lauri Pyatt at 515 986 5520 or lpyatt@soiowa.org.

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!



www.facebook.com/SpecialOlympicsIA

Twitter: @SOIowa



Special Olympics Iowa

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Thank You to Our Partners!

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Premier Statewide Partners



Champion and Premier Statewide Partners provide a comprehensive level of support of all programs and services offered by Special Olympics Iowa (SOIA). Organizations may be recognized at these levels for financial support, in-kind donations or any combination thereof, and are recognized in many other ways. To find out more about our current partnership opportunities or for information on how to become one, visit our website at www.soiowa.org and look under Support Us, or contact the SOIA Director of Corporate and Foundation Relations Cindy Schaffer at 515-986-5520.