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The Olympic Spirit



Special Olympics
Virginia

Published for the Athletes & Friends of Special Olympics Virginia (SOVA)



2007 Special Olympics World Summer Games —Shanghai, China

October 2-11, 2007

The 2007 Special Olympics World Summer Games will showcase the talents of **more than 7,000 athletes** of all ability levels from every continent. Virginia will send eight shining examples of our mission to the **World Games** to demonstrate their abilities both on the playing surface and as ambassadors of citizens with intellectual disabilities.

Their goal is to win—not just competitions—but friends while demonstrating that they can contribute to the world community. Our hope is that they reach out to the Chinese people and experience their culture, while teaching them to accept those that are different. **World Games Athlete and SOVA Global Messenger Sterling Grooms said, "I want people to see me for who I am, not for what I am not."** China will become the first country in history to host the **Special Olympics World Summer Games, Olympic Games, and Paralympic Games** all within a span of just 12 months.



WORLD SUMMER GAMES
SHANGHAI 2007

Team Patrons

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Delegation Sponsors

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Hampton Park Men's Club

Team USA Sponsor

Bank of America

Eight SOVA athletes selected for Team USA

SOVA is proud to announce that eight of the Commonwealth's finest athletes will compete in Shanghai, China. **USA! USA!**

Top row, left to right:

Peter Zaino (Midlothian) **Swimming**

Grace Anne Braxton (Fredericksburg) **Golf**

Melanie Norris (Virginia Beach) **Bowling**

Jennifer Mitchell (Alexandria) **Swimming**

Bottom row, left to right:

Sterling Grooms (Winchester) **Powerlifting**

Joey Goodrich (Pearisburg) **Track & Field**

Evelyn Maguire (Fairfax) **Track & Field**

Jon Fried (Crozet) **Tennis**

– For information on how to sponsor our athletes attending the World Games please contact Katie Botha at 800.932.4653 x3024.

www.specialolympicsva.org/worldgames07



EVENT WRAP-UP

Polar Plunge XV

Saturday, February 3, 2007
Virginia Beach Oceanfront

- 3,500 plungers raised over \$800,000 for SOVA at the 15th Annual Polar Plunge.
- Presented by Fox 106.9 and Cox Communications and sponsored by Virginia Natural Gas.
- Sand sculptors "Team Sandtastic" were special guests.



- Since 1993 more than \$3.2 million has been raised for SOVA, with over 21,000 people taking the plunge into the Atlantic Ocean.
- Visit www.polarplunge.com for more information or to view more photos of the event.
- Next year's Plunge is scheduled for February 2, 2008.



Trivia Challenge

Thursday, March 8, 2007
Westfields Marriott

- The 1st Trivia Challenge proved to be a great success for Special Olympics Virginia.
- Participants answered a variety of trivia questions.
- A silent auction was also held.
- The next Trivia Challenge is scheduled for mid-March 2008.
- For information please contact Michelle Gates at 703-359-4301 or mgates@specialolympicsva.org.



A letter from Rick Jeffrey

– Special Olympics Virginia President

Sports can be pivotal to the human experience. They can be a form of entertainment, a means of recreation, a metaphorical test of survival or, in Special Olympics terms, an opportunity for genuine interaction; a relationship strengthened; a heart touched; a mind changed. The old coaching maxim that sports build character is not always accurate. Legendary sportscaster **Heywood Hale Broun** put it this way, **"Sports does not build character; it reveals it."** And in Special Olympics, reveal it is what it does.

The center spread of this newsletter is simply one of the finest articles ever written about SOVA. It could have been the fact that **Ian Frazier** "made every putt inside of five feet." Or it could have been the fact that Ian "chipped the ball inside of two feet" to save par at the eighth hole. But what makes this article special; what makes Ian special; what makes Special Olympics special is what the author writes at the end of the article: **"Ian showed that day how a spirit of strength can rise from the heart of a true champion."**

This is what sets Special Olympics apart and makes Special Olympics an aspirational program. Because when that "spirit of strength" rises from the heart of any competing Special Olympian, it can **Open the Heart and Change the Mind** of the observer, volunteer, or fellow participant.

It could be golfer **Grace Anne Braxton's** unwillingness to compromise on an approach shot over water at the final hole of the **Special Olympics National Golf Championship** even though her caddie repeatedly urged her to "lay it up Grace Anne, lay it up."

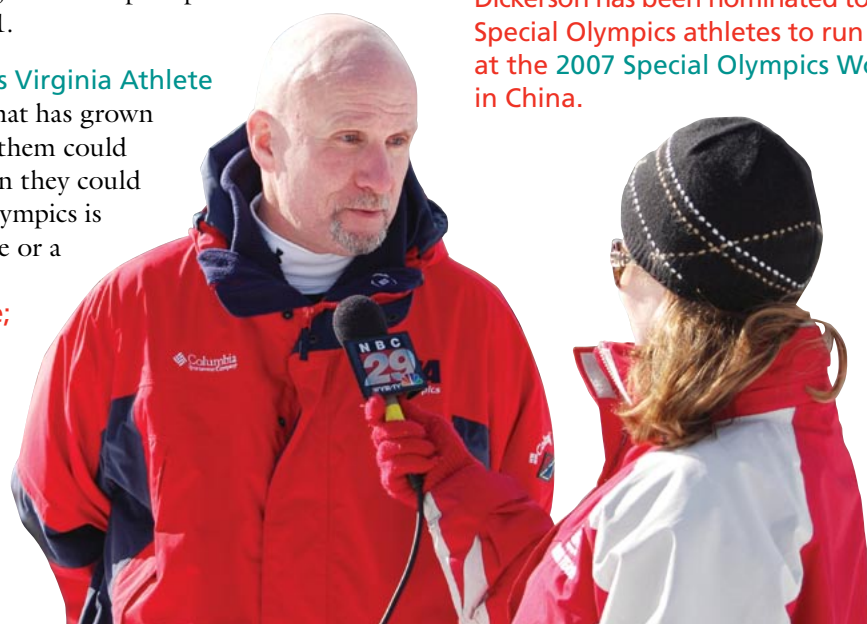
It could be track athlete **Woody Vereen**, intellectually disabled and living with CP, pushing his wheelchair backwards at the **Penn Relays**, forcing a change of the rule which required the front wheel of the wheelchair to cross the finish line to determine a winner.

It could be bowler **Tracy Dawn Hancock**, wheelchair user, blind, intellectually disabled, making her bowling ball hook or fade according to a verbal prompt and carrying a 100+ average at the **World Games** in 1991.

Each of these athletes is a former **Special Olympics Virginia Athlete of the Year.** Each breathed life into a movement that has grown statewide and worldwide into proportions none of them could imagine and allowing each to accomplish more than they could ever dream. Yet each would tell you that Special Olympics is not an approach shot over water or a 100 meter race or a strike or a spare. **Special Olympics is the eye you catch; the hand you shake; the hug you receive; the heart you open; the mind you change.**

Special Olympics is for and about people. And Special Olympics is not just for and about Ian, Grace Anne, Woody and Tracy. **Special Olympics is for and about you.**

Onward.



The race is only half the story

Karen Dickerson, an extraordinary long distance runner and Special Olympics athlete from Northern Virginia, recently ran the **Boston Marathon** in 3 hours, 24 minutes and 58 seconds.

Dickerson qualified for the Boston Marathon in October of 2006. She persevered, despite dreadful weather conditions, while shaving five minutes off her qualifying time.

"Her race was incredible, but most importantly, the way she was able to get herself to the start line on her own was just as big an achievement," said mom Ernestine Dickerson. "I put her on a hotel shuttle at 5:30 am on race day which took her to Boston Commons. From there she had to change to a bus. Due to the cold, wind and rain, she had extra clothes that she had to shed before the race, which she had to check into the appropriate baggage pickup bus. She then had to find her way to the appropriate corral for her number. So, as you might imagine, I was quite nervous until a friend called to give me her first split - then I knew she was on the course! Even after the race, she had to navigate through the various stations, pick up her bag and find the family meeting area. Needless to say, quite an accomplishment all the way around!"

Dickerson's other achievements include participation in the **2005 and 2006 Marine Corps Marathons.** In 2006 she finished in three hours, 29 minutes and 16 seconds, finishing 24 minutes faster than the year before and securing her position in the Boston Marathon where she **finished 19th out of 897** women in her age group.

"I love running races; I am very happy that I qualified for Boston," said Dickerson. Her first long distance race was the **Parkway Classic 5K** in 2000. At **Thomas Edison High School**, she ran cross-country, indoor track, and outdoor track.

In 2002, she was selected to be part of Team USA to compete in the 2003 World Games in Ireland. While in Ireland, **Dickerson competed with stress fractures and still triumphed and brought home the bronze medal for Virginia!**

Dickerson hopes that one day she will run beside another Special Olympics athlete at a long distance race. Until then, she will continue inspiring others while working to open hearts and change minds with her passion for running.

Dickerson has been nominated to be one of ten Special Olympics athletes to run the Final Leg at the 2007 Special Olympics World Games in China.



COMPETITION WRAP-UP

Winter Championships

January 12-13, 2007
Northern Virginia

- Nearly 400 SOVA athletes competed for the gold in bowling, figure and speed ice skating and gymnastics.
- Presented by Booz Allen Hamilton and sponsored by ExxonMobil.
- Female gymnasts competed in vault, uneven bars, balance beam and floor exercise while the men competed in floor exercise, pommel horse, rings, vault, parallel bars and horizontal bars.



Alpine Skiing Championships

January 22-23, 2007
Wintergreen Resort

- More than 150 beginner, intermediate and advanced-level SOVA athletes skied for the gold on various slopes at the 2007 Alpine Skiing Championships.
- Wintergreen Resort has hosted the Skiing Championships since 1978.

Basketball Championships

March 16-17, 2007
Stafford & Spotsylvania

- Nearly 800 athletes competed in team play and individual skills competitions on the Stafford County Public Schools courts.
- The athletes, families, friends and over 100 volunteers, enjoyed the presenting sponsor's GEICO All Star Friday Night including the dance-off between the GEICO Gecko and Cosmo the Dog.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Virginia Law Enforcement Torch Run

June 1-8, 2007
Across the Commonwealth

- Presented by SunTrust and Macy's.
- The Torch Run is Special Olympics' largest grass roots fund-raiser and public awareness vehicle, raising more than \$808,000 annually in Virginia and over \$20 million worldwide.
- This vehicle for fund-raising and public awareness is organized by the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police, Virginia Sheriff's Association, Virginia Department of Corrections and Virginia Association of Regional Jails.



- More than 3,500 Virginia Law Enforcement Officials will cross the Commonwealth carrying the Flame of Hope over 1,900 miles ending at the Robins Center on the University of Richmond campus to the Opening Ceremony of the Summer Games.

Summer Games & Olympic Festival

June 8-9, 2007
University of Richmond

- Presented by Comcast and Hardee's.
- More than 1,400 SOVA athletes from the Commonwealth will compete in bowling, powerlifting, softball, swimming, tennis, and track & field.
- Competitions for all sports will continue early Saturday morning.
- In addition to the competitions, the Summer Games offers a family festival, including games, food, music, and a Health & Wellness expo.



No "bones" about it — it was Ian's day.

Golf and life lessons thanks to SOVA Athlete & Global Messenger Ian Frazier. - John Rogers



In a subtle, pleated-pants way, golf has potential for those transcendent moments when we feel larger than life, when we go beyond our personal limits. It's very rare, though, that achievements on the golf course rise to heroic. But on a November day in Virginia Beach I witnessed something special. It was as if Ian Frazier rose up and wrestled with the fates, like Jacob taking on the angel of God.

Ian's twenty-eight year journey to Virginia Beach is the history of a man who has clawed out a beautiful existence in a life that barely gave him a start. Ian spent the first three months of his life breathing the clinical air of a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. Ian likely had a stroke in the womb that led to his premature birth, and when he finally went home on his original due date, his battles had only started.

Following a diagnosis of cerebral palsy, their pediatrician urged Ian's parents, Alan and Terrie, to institutionalize their son. The doctor said Ian would never be able to do or achieve anything. But that was not an option.

Ian arrived at my driving range on July 11 of this year, a young man in blue jeans and a t-shirt, walking as he does with a little hitch, and a deliberateness that suggests he is concentrating on his steps. I did not know at that time that Ian was blind in his right eye, and I did not know he had suffered through 20 surgeries to stand there in front of me listening to advice about his golf swing.

I did not know that he did not speak until age five. I did not know that he was more than a special athlete; he is also a highly-demanded SOVA Global Messenger, traveling across Virginia to speak about

the organization and his disability. I did not know what an indomitable spirit lived inside that weathered body!

In the weeks following our first meeting, Ian and I prepared to play together in a Special Olympics golf tournament. Ian missed the ball about every second or third swing, and generally only hit the ball about 20 to 40 yards when he made contact, but we had fun, and we scrambled for occasional pars and bogeys.

When he missed the ball, Ian would say, "Of course, that was a practice swing." We started calling these "bones", named for Ian's previous coach, who encouraged practice swings. So we laughed, and practiced, and tried to keep the "bones" to minimum.

On a bright September day, Ian and I met at Heritage Oaks Golf Course for our first tournament. We rode a cart for nine holes and shared the after-noon with our playing partners, one coach and one athlete, just like us.

The other coach made it clear from the beginning that the tournament was for fun and that we should not worry too much about the details. So, when Ian had a "bones", instead of counting the stroke, which would make it my turn, Ian just kept swinging until he made contact.

In this fashion, we went around the course having a great time, and finishing in 56 strokes.

After our first tournament, Ian and I set our sights on the SOVA Fall Championships, which were coming up in November in Virginia Beach. As we got closer to the big day, Ian's ability and his confidence grew.

After a good shot, Ian started taking the club in his left hand, making a motion like he was going to toss it in the air, releasing it briefly, and snatching it out of sky with a flourish. It was his equivalent of the Tiger fist-pump.

I arrived at the hotel in Virginia Beach the night before our tournament, in time for the opening ceremonies of the SOVA Fall Championships which included an actual Olympic flame, a pep rally, a dance, and an all-around festive atmosphere. Ian was one of the speakers at the ceremonies, and he spoke with a clarity and forcefulness that I did not expect from my usually quiet friend. In front of hundreds of athletes and thousands of family members and volunteers, he summoned a strength I had not seen before.

The next morning found us at the First Tee of Hampton Roads, an executive course where we would play our nine-hole, alternate shot tournament. This time we were going to walk, and we were expected to play strictly by the rules. I told Terrie I worried about how much fun it would be for Ian if he had a large number of "bones" and kept losing his turn.

Early on, I was preoccupied with the pressure of trying to hit shots worthy of a coach and club pro. And I wanted to stay competitive with the other players, who birdied the first hole after the athlete hit

his approach to eight feet and the coach made the putt. Meanwhile, Ian made a three-footer on the first hole, a two-footer on the second, and a four-footer on the third, all solid putts, and his tempo on the full-swing looked great.

It wasn't until there was a backup on the seventh tee that I realized what was happening. While I worried about my swing, and my putting stroke, and keeping up with our fellow-competitors, Ian had played without missing a single shot. In practice he occasionally even whiffed a chip; but at the Championships, through six holes, he hit every chip, got the ball moving forward on every full shot, and made every putt inside of five feet.

On our ninth and final hole, Ian teed off with a five-wood, knocking it about a hundred yards right down the middle. He gave the club that little toss-and-snatch move, and strode down the fairway.

Afterwards, Ian paced back and forth waiting for the awards ceremony. He was waiting for the silver medal that 43 strokes earned in our division.

He had gone the entire tournament without a single "bones"! I have never played, nor have I seen a finer round of golf. We both got medals, but I knew who was the champion; I knew who had beaten the odds again; and I knew who was giving the lesson. Ian showed that day how a spirit of strength can rise from the heart of a true champion, and it was a performance I will never forget.



UPCOMING EVENTS (CONT'D)

Winning Spirit Golf Classic

July 23, 2007
Stonehenge Golf & Country Club
Midlothian

- Presented by Sheetz.
- Lunch, dinner, contests, silent auction and awards ceremony. Call 804.346.5544.

15th Annual Dulles Day Family Festival & Plane Pull

September 8, 2007
Washington Dulles International Airport

- Presented by Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority Police Department and sponsored by SunTrust and Macy's.
- 50 teams will compete by pulling a 145,000 pound Boeing jet! Please visit www.planepull.com for more details or call 703.426.5601.
- Enjoy the 3rd Annual Kid's Bus Pull Event, 9th Annual Car Show, airplane displays, food, games and rides, too.

Richmond Corporate Games

September 14-15, 2007
Glen Allen

- Team building for 30 local sponsors.
- Raft relays, volleyball, water balloon relays, tug-of-war, and other events.

Golf Championships

October 20, 2007
Chesterfield

- Over 150 athletes will compete for the gold.
- Sponsored by Farm Bureau Insurance and First Tee.

Fall Championships

November 3-4, 2007
Virginia Beach

- Opening Ceremony at Ocean Lakes High School at 8 p.m. Saturday evening with Victory Dance for the athletes and volunteers.
- Over 800 athletes will compete in equestrian, golf, roller skating, soccer, unified bowling, and volleyball.



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2007 SOVA Award Celebration winners – presented by Virginia Farm Bureau Insurance

SOVA and Virginia Farm Bureau Insurance are pleased to honor the outstanding efforts of these award winners:

Chantal Sicot (Woodbridge, VA) SOVA Athlete of the Year Award

Sicot earned the award for her participation, communication and knowledge of sports programs and events. She recently started coaching basketball at Woodbridge Middle School in Woodbridge and serves as the assistant den leader to the Boys Scouts of America, Cub Scout Pack 1149. Sicot won four bronze medals in powerlifting as a member of Team Virginia at the first Special Olympics National Games last July.

Jim Strock (Staunton, VA) SOVA Coach of the Year Award

Strock has been coaching sports for SOVA for about eight years including volleyball, half-court basketball and golf. He is taking over as SOVA's golf coordinator and has attended many annual coach's conferences and is a certified Special Olympics Coach. When he's not helping with dinner, dancing, or fund-raising, he's volunteering for SOVA.

Owen Grogan (Roanoke, VA) SOVA's Outstanding Area Volunteer Award

Grogan, a 22 year SOVA veteran, has served as Chairperson for Area 8, is a frequent guest speaker at Salem Avalanche baseball games, the annual Christmas tree sale, the 2006 Polar Plunge and annual Mariners Landing golf tournament. He works hard to ensure the success of SOVA athletes and volunteers within the community.

Rick Meyers, M.D. (Richmond, VA) Outstanding Chapter Volunteer Award

Meyers has volunteered for the past 20 years as on-site physician at Alpine Championships and Summer Games. He is the Chairman of the Development Committee where he has led SOVA's efforts into the Individual Giving arena which has increased 400% since 2004. Through his efforts, many new donors and potential supporters have become personally involved with SOVA. Meyer's leadership and passion for SOVA help spread our critical message of opportunity and change.

The Arnold Family (Charlottesville, VA) SOVA Family of the Year Award

This family is an inspiration to all who know their story. Gene and Jeannie have been very involved with SOVA since their son, Joe, 21 became eligible for the SOVA program. They are involved in the Special Needs Ministry where Jeannie teaches two Sunday School classes while Gene is the head of the committee at their church. Gene has developed his own PowerPoint presentation and delivers comprehensive flyers to anyone interested in SOVA. Gene's church youth group supplied over 40 volunteers to help serve lunch at the Charlottesville Regional basketball tournament.

Marjorie Loya (Chesterfield, VA) Virginia H. Foster Winning Spirit Award

Loya has been involved with SOVA for 24 years. She has been the Local Coordinator for Chesterfield County, a coach, and a mentor to athletes and volunteers. In addition, Loya has organized overnight trips, acting as Head of Delegation at State events, Regional events and Invitational events. She was also the head coach of the track team that attended the first National Games in Ames, Iowa in 2006. Through her efforts as the Chesterfield County School Based Program Coordinator the program has made major advances in developing SOVA programs in schools.



Leaders of a movement

– Roy Zeidman, Senior Vice President
Questions about contributing to SOVA? Call 800.932.4653 x3022.

In the last month I heard several of our **Global Messengers** present their message of acceptance and inclusion. **Special Olympics Virginia has 16 athletes trained as speakers that are making presentations on diversity awareness and education.** As these members of our program step off the playing field and up to the podium, they are fulfilling our mission of opening hearts and changing minds as advocates for our program and its message of hope and change.



When they speak, people listen... and learn.

Global Messenger Frank Stephens spoke at halftime of the **Colonial Athletic Association** semifinal game at the Richmond Coliseum. 10,000 fans stayed in their seats to hear his message of how important it is that Special Olympics provides people with intellectual disabilities opportunities to demonstrate capabilities. I hope that everyone at that game got the same message that I got – Frank has capabilities, he can be my co-worker, my neighbor, and my friend, if I give him the opportunity.

The athletes of Special Olympics are raising the bar as they become leaders of this movement. As they advocate for acceptance and inclusion, they lead by example. They want to be productive, contributing members of their communities and demonstrate this by becoming contributors to SOVA.

SOVA was recently notified that two of our athletes have made provisions within their estates to make legacy gifts. **Max Everton**, of Virginia Beach, and his father Melvin, updated their estate plans recently. When their attorney asked "what would you like to do with your assets when both of you are deceased?" Max said that **"It should go to Special Olympics because they help me be a better person!"**

A second athlete, from Northern Virginia works full time and has named SOVA as the beneficiary of his retirement savings. **His legacy will be a scholarship fund for Northern Virginia athletes to attend Summer Games** to motivate his peers to have the experiences he has had.

Both of these athletes are leaders within SOVA and are now leading our army of supporters into the planned giving arena. Their message is clear: **Participation is the key and the size of the gift does not matter.** As we open hearts and change minds, we are building a more accepting and inclusive community.

Whether you leave thousands or millions, **we hope that you will consider including a legacy gift for Special Olympics in your will.** When you do, you will ensure the development of a welcome environment where children and adults with intellectual disabilities interact with and change the general public's attitude about their capabilities. **The gift that you make will change lives and brighten the future for thousands of athletes with intellectual disabilities.**

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Name: _____

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- Please send me volunteer information.
- I would like more information on planned giving.
- I know someone who could benefit. Send me an athlete recruitment package.
- I would love to help! My tax-deductible donation is: \$ _____.

OUR LEGAL NAME

Special Olympics, Virginia, Inc.
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Richmond, VA 23294

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The Olympic Spirit

Published for the Athletes & Friends of Special Olympics Virginia (SOVA)



Special Olympics
Virginia

Created by the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation
for the benefit of persons with intellectual disabilities.

SOVA Urban Program flourishes with help

– Floyd E. Miller, Director of Urban Programs. Call 804.346.5544
or e-mail fmiller@specialolympicsva.org for more information.

In ten years, SOVA's Urban Program has grown to include over 1,000 athletes within the Cities of Richmond & Petersburg. The program serves students and adults living in group or residential homes throughout the Cities. Our goal is to create partnerships and alliances with local companies, churches, universities, organizations, and the Cities. Since its inception, many organizations have helped including start-up funding from **The Jackson Foundation**; **Philip Morris Employee Community Fund** grants; and current funding from **The Gwathmey Foundation**, **Seay Memorial Trust**, **Mattel Children's Foundation** and **UPS**.



Financial support is half of the need for a successful program. **Floyd Miller**, Director of the Urban Program, recently presented the **2007 Most Valuable Partner Award** to **Scott & Stringfellow, Inc.** for continuous volunteer and financial support since 2004. Miller said, "The quality of the events offered in the City of Richmond has improved since Scott & Stringfellow adopted the program."

Nicole Lambert, volunteer coordinator for Scott & Stringfellow, said, "All of our employees enjoy coming out and volunteering. We have just as much fun as the athletes and love supporting Special Olympics."

Their volunteers helped ensure that the **Urban Programs Track & Field Event** was the best ever. The games were part of **National Youth Service Day** — a program that mobilizes youth as leaders to identify and address the needs of their community through service learning projects. SOVA relies on thousands of individuals and corporations to share their resources and time to help open hearts and change minds about the value of persons with intellectual disabilities.



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