



UNITY in Virginia school communities

6750 cheer sticks. 3083 fans. 852 little feet. 71 schools.
3 national Youth Activation Committee members. 1 trip to Idaho.

What do all these numbers mean? These are just a few of the **Special Olympics Virginia** superlatives made possible by a Project UNIFY grant from the Department of Education. Project UNIFY is a year-long national project designed to develop school communities where all youth are agents of change – fostering respect and dignity for people with intellectual disabilities through **Special Olympics**. Last year, **Special Olympics Virginia** was awarded \$92,000 for three Project UNIFY initiatives:

Little Feet Meet

Freeman High School was taken over by 852 “little feet” during the inaugural Little Feet Meet in April. 426 children enrolled in Henrico County’s developmentally delayed preschool and elementary programs competed in everything from the 25-meter run to the powerlifting competition, featuring barbells made from 2-liter bottles filled with sand.

The athletes were paired with older buddies from their schools during the event, which marked Henrico’s first major involvement in **Special Olympics’** new **Young Athletes™** program. **Young Athletes** offers children ages 2 to 7 a chance to exercise and train. In the past, athletes have had to wait until age 8 to compete in **Special Olympics**.



Urban Programs

Special Olympics Virginia’s Urban Programs meet a valuable need for an isolated population – people with intellectual disabilities in the City of Richmond and Petersburg who are not able to participate in traditional athletics. With support from The Philip Morris Employee Community Fund, The Robins Foundation and the Project UNIFY grant, Youth Activation Committees were started at 13 Richmond schools. These committees were charged with finding new ways to reach other youth and promote **Special Olympics** activities in their home environments and school communities.

Additionally, three Richmond-area students, Gary Quash, Malcolm Simmons and Sierra Seaborne, were selected to participate in Project UNIFY’s national Youth Activation Committee and had the pleasure of traveling to Idaho for the **World Winter Games**.

Also in this issue...

President’s letter; Upcoming events	2
Call him Coach; Award winners	3
Statewide photos; River City Rappel	4-5
Statewide partnerships	6
Give... and receive; Inclusion	7
New e-newsletter and Web site	8

Volunteer to Cheer

It’s not as special without fans. Close to 2200 athletes understood exactly that when 3083 fans filled the stands with their enthusiasm during **Special Olympics Virginia’s** three largest state-level competitions; **Fall Championships, Basketball Championships** and **Summer Games**.

Fans who volunteered to cheer – many from area schools – made these our loudest and most enthusiastic competitions yet with free cheer sticks, colorful posters and temporary tattoos!

Thanks to the **Project UNIFY grant**, **Special Olympics Virginia** has connected with **71 schools and thousands of new students and fans across the Commonwealth**.



UPCOMING 2009 EVENTS

SEP. 19 Promoting Acceptance and Respect (PAR) Tournament

First Tee of Chesterfield



Grab your golf clubs and link up with Special Olympics athletes during this 4-man Captain's Choice tournament, also featuring skills competitions for Level 1 athletes.

Presented by:
Farm Bureau Insurance & First Tee

OCT. 3 Plane Pull Dulles International Airport

Annual fund-raising event and team competition to determine which team of 20 can pull a 150,000+ pound cargo jet the fastest.



Presented by:
Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority

OCT. 10 River City Rappel SunTrust Center in Downtown Richmond

Go Over the Edge for Special Olympics Virginia and rappel down the side of a skyscraper!

Partnerships available!
See page 5 for more.

NOV. 7-8 Fall Championships Virginia Beach

Volunteer to cheer when more than 800 athletes go for the gold in roller skating, soccer, golf, bowling, bocce and golf.

Presented by:
Virginia Knights of Columbus

All events open to the public.
For details, call Holly Claytor at 800.932.GOLD or visit specialolympicsva.org.



A letter from Rick Jeffrey — President, Special Olympics Virginia

Isn't it nice that we talk about being an inclusive society? Or about respecting all people? Or about being unified as a community? But you know, sometimes we just don't get it. And all of us are guilty. None of us is immune.

We use the word **retard** or **retarded** or even the term **Special Olympics** as a metaphor for **not good enough**. It happens with young people at a bus stop. It happens with adults in the workplace. It even happened to President Obama on the Jay Leno Show when he compared his ineptness as a bowler to being "kind of like **Special Olympics**."

Ian Frazier is a **Special Olympics** athlete from Harrisonburg. Intellectually disabled, blind in one eye, hearing impaired and with cerebral palsy, he has had 20 surgeries just to stand or walk or hear. And yet Ian is a golfer and a basketball player and one of the most sought after athlete speakers in **Special Olympics Virginia**. **Is that not good enough?**

Mat Anecchini is an athlete from Chesterfield; he is blind and autistic. And oh yes, Mat played in the band at Matoaca High School. **He sang the National Anthem at the Special Olympics Virginia Summer Games**. In **Special Olympics**, Mat is a speed skater... a swimmer... a downhill skier. **Is that not good enough?**

Special Olympics is more than good enough. **Special Olympics** is the way the world should be; rich in understanding and joy and showing no judgment. **Special Olympics** is a welcome environment; more respectful in its conduct, more inclusive in its nature. **Special Olympics** is a unified community where all can participate equally; where everyone can reach their potential; where Ian Frazier and Mat Anecchini do not walk as one among us, but as one of us.

There is a difference, and that is the difference that **Special Olympics** makes
Onward.



Ian Frazier
(left)

Mat Anecchini
(with his father, Mike)

Call him Coach

Chesterfield County's Richard Koch wins Global UPS Award

When Richard and his wife Karin were blessed with a son 29 years ago, Richard had plans to be the Little League dad. When Jonathan was born, though, it soon became obvious the very simple things in life may be impossible for him to do. Including playing catch.

But in 1987, Jonathan found a home on the field with **Special Olympics Virginia** and the Koch's found a new way of thinking. "Participating in **Special Olympics causes an optimistic, forward-looking attitudinal change,**" Richard said. "These changes may occur suddenly, like when you realize your child can complete a task that you thought was not possible; or they may occur gradually, as you see your child mature, gain confidence and take on challenges that you thought best to shelter them from.

"Playing catch with Jonathan is the realization of a dream," Koch continued. "Prior to **Special Olympics**, we didn't see how he would be involved in any recreation as an adult. Perhaps he would participate as an equipment manager, but it was unlikely that he would actually play a position on any organized team."

Today, Jonathan competes in six **Special Olympics** sports during the year. In high school, Jonathan was awarded a varsity letter for his participation in track, basketball and baseball.

Watch a UPS video and read more on Richard and Jonathan Koch at specialolympicsva.org.



Richard Koch (right) and his family (Karin, Jonathan and Michelle) at the UPS awards ceremony

Richard, who is director of accounting operations for UPS Freight, logs nearly 70 volunteer hours for **Special Olympics** each month, serving as a league director, coach and tournament director. He also developed the Manchester Invitational Basketball Tournament, the largest tournament in Virginia conducted entirely by volunteers. He further uses his accounting skills to help strengthen his area's grassroots management and fundraising.

And in February, Richard was singled out for his incredible 12-year commitment to **Special Olympics** when he received the **Global UPS Jim Casey Community Service Award**, which is granted to one of UPS's 425,000 employees each year to recognize outstanding community service.

"The world would be better off if everyone gave a little bit instead of waiting for someone else to give a lot," he said. "Everyone contributes, everyone succeeds. It's a nice story; it's a good fairy tale, but we can live that real-life fairy tale pretty easily. All we have to do is commit to it and watch people succeed."

Special Olympics Virginia 2008 award winners

He's been a Special Olympics athlete for more than 30 years. He's participated in soccer, basketball, track & field, tennis, bowling and softball. In 1999, he was a member of the USA soccer team during the Special Olympics World Games. But for the 2008 Athlete of the Year, David Sutton, Special Olympics truly is about more than just sports.

Ten years ago, David couldn't read. Thanks to the encouragement of his coaches, Wayne and Ginny McCoy, though, David has been working with a reading tutor and for the first time, he stood before a crowd and read his acceptance speech during this year's Special Olympics Virginia Annual Awards Celebration.

"Thanks to everyone for this award," David said. "This is bigger than me. There are so many athletes all over Virginia who have worked just as hard as I have and only one of them has been chosen for this award. I'm truly blessed to be in the same category as all of these guys and girls."

Special Olympics Virginia recognized David as well as several other outstanding coaches and volunteers during this year's Annual Awards Celebration, presented by Farm Bureau Insurance. Congratulations to all of the award winners.

E-mail volunteers@specialolympicsva.org or call 800.932.GOLD to volunteer in your area.

2008 award winners

Program Volunteer of the Year
Chris Hall
Chesapeake

Outstanding Area Volunteers
Emmett Bunch
Chesapeake
BJ Norris
Blacksburg

Outstanding Family of the Year
The Van Lowe Family
Dale City

Coach of the Year
Dan Dillon
Leesburg

Athlete of the Year
David Sutton
Kilmarnock

Virginia H. Foster Winning Spirit Award
Roger Giesinger
Norfolk



From left: Dan Dillon, Chris Hall, BJ Norris, David Sutton, Emmett Bunch, Peggy Van Lowe, Leonard Van Lowe and Roger Giesinger



Virginia Run Triathlon

From its inception, the Virginia Run Triathlon has encouraged inclusion. Founders LJ White and Shandra Richardson wanted to create a fun, family and community-oriented race, as well as a benefit for [Special Olympics Virginia](#). In 2005, they organized the first Virginia Run Triathlon in Northern Virginia, raising more than \$3,000 and more importantly, welcoming their first [Special Olympics](#) athlete, who competed on the same course with the other triathletes.

Just three years later, the event raised close to \$10,000 and eight [Special Olympics Virginia](#) athletes participated; each completed the race and several placed in their age groups.

This year, LJ was thrilled to have a record 10 Special Olympics athletes participate. "The other triathletes truly were in awe and inspired as they watched the [Special Olympics](#) athletes kick off the race in the pool. There were more than a few tears on the swim deck as hundreds of people stood and cheered. This is what community is all about."





VMI Games

One Saturday each April, you can find 350 people in uniform on the drill field at Virginia Military Institute in Lexington. No, they're not cadets waiting for instruction; they're **Special Olympics Virginia** athletes ready to compete in the annual VMI Games.

For the seventh year in a row, 250 cadet volunteers spent the day shooting hoops, lifting weights, swimming laps, playing bocce and running heats with hundreds of **Special Olympics** athletes. The event, which has become a favorite on Post, is a part of the VMI Corps of Cadets' spring field training exercises, during which cadets learn about leadership through public service activities.



National Unified Sports Bowling Tournament in Las Vegas

Three **Special Olympics Virginia** teams experienced bowling's biggest stage in February during the **19th Annual National Unified Sports Bowling Tournament** at the 60-lane Cashman Convention Center in Las Vegas. More than 450 bowlers representing 14 states were grouped into 115 four-player teams comprised of two **Special Olympics** athletes and their unified partners.

Virginia's athletes stood out among the Vegas lights as **Area 9** (Southwest Virginia) took home a bronze medal for the 4-person event, as well as a gold medal and fifth place for the two-person games. The **Area 14** (Loudoun) team brought home the gold in the 4-person event, and a gold and bronze in the two-person events. The **Area 26** (Northern Virginia) quartet brought home a bronze medal, as well as silver and bronze medals in the two-persons events.



River City Rappel

Richmond's tallest fundraiser for Special Olympics Virginia will have participants go **rappelling down**

the side of the Suntrust Center skyscraper

@ 919 E. Main Street in Downtown Richmond

OCTOBER 10, 2009

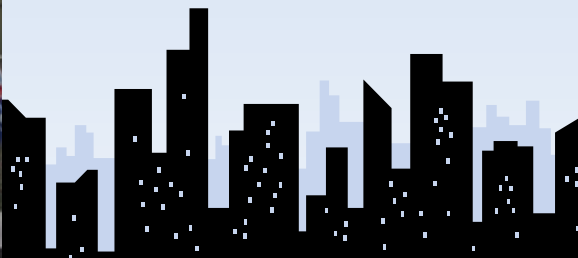
Or, get your coworkers and fundraise together to

TOSS YOUR BOSS

Over the EDGE

specialolympicsva.org

Follow us on Twitter: @OvertheEdgeRVA



Special Olympics scores with Sheetz

You may never have thought a simple stop at Sheetz would result in additional opportunities for Special Olympics athletes, but it does.

Sheetz's partnership with Special Olympics began in 1991 in Pennsylvania. In Virginia, Sheetz has been a proud community partner of Special Olympics since 1994. During the past 15 years, Virginia has grown to become the company's second largest market and their support of Special Olympics has expanded at the same pace as their business efforts, making them an official statewide partner in 2009.



Jeff Martz, Sales Development Manager for Sheetz with Katie Botha, Director of Corporate Development for Special Olympics Virginia

In addition to providing much needed financial support through year-round in-store coin collections, Sheetz employees have produced and delivered thousands of healthy snacks, breakfasts and lunches for state and regional events. They also actively volunteer their time to help with Summer Games and fundraisers like the Winning Spirit Golf Tournament. To date, Sheetz has given more than \$2 million in financial and in-kind donations to Special Olympics programs in Pennsylvania, Virginia, Maryland, West Virginia, Ohio and North Carolina.

So, the next time you stop at your neighborhood Sheetz location for gas, a made-to-order food item or specialty beverage from the Sheetz espresso bar, be sure to say a big thank-you to the friendly manager and employees!



Colonial Forge High School and Special Olympics Virginia Area 11 cheerleaders strike a pose with the GEICO Gecko and Cosmo.

GEICO plunges into statewide partnership

GEICO and their fantastic volunteer committees have always been instrumental in kicking off our annual statewide **Fall Championships** and **Basketball Championships**. But this year, they've gone beyond **Opening Ceremonies** and the **Victory Dances** and also embraced a **Polar Plunge** sponsorship and a new cause-marketing campaign to gain statewide partner status. In a year where the economic downturn has many corporate partners tightening community outreach budgets, GEICO has shown incredible commitment to **Special Olympics Virginia's** programs.

In addition to corporate sponsorship dollars, the GEICO Gecko and a whole team of Cavemen were among the more than 3200 brave souls who stormed the icy Atlantic waters at this year's **Polar Plunge** in February, resulting in record breaking online fundraising efforts and total donations topping a cool \$850,000 for **Special Olympics Virginia**.

Short on cash to make a donation? GEICO's new Cash for Quotes program makes it easy by donating **\$15 to Special Olympics** on your behalf when you call 800.342.9070 and use referral code 37911. There is no obligation and the call is free, so get dialing!

Want to learn more about our new special statewide partner program? Contact Katie Botha, Director of Corporate Development, at 800.932.GOLD x 3024 or kbotha@specialolympicsva.org for more information.



The GEICO Gecko and a team of Cavemen get ready to take the Plunge!



GEICO
geico.com



Dr. Rick Meyers



Robert Stowers of Chesterfield lights the Olympic Cauldron at the Robins Center

Lighting the way to inclusion

For the 24th year, Law Enforcement officers carried the Flame of Hope across the Commonwealth to shine a light on Special Olympics athletes' capabilities. This year, these "Guardians of the Flame" raised more than \$750,000 for Special Olympics, and have worked to build bridges of unity in every community.



At a recent Torch Run conference, for example, teams of officers and athletes paired up to shoot some hoops. The athletes were excited to show their skills; the officers set the plays and passed the ball. At the end of the third quarter, an athlete made a go-ahead three-pointer at the buzzer. Among the rousing cheers, three officers from the athlete's team ran to him, picked him up on their shoulders and carried him to the bench. No hesitation. No consideration that he was "special." For that moment, this young man was not a Special Olympics athlete; he was not someone with an intellectual disability. He was a basketball player - their teammate who had just made a terrific shot.

Virginia athlete David Egan says he looks forward to the day when athletes are treated not as one among us, but as one of us. On that basketball court, those officers fulfilled David's dream. Thanks to the thousands of Virginia Law Enforcement Torch Run officers who capture the spirit of Special Olympics every day in their communities.

Give... and receive

Many years ago, when Dr. Rick Meyers, a highly regarded Richmond-based orthopaedic surgeon, volunteered his medical expertise at **Special Olympics Virginia's Summer Games**, he could not have known how his involvement would change his life. Since that initial volunteer stint, Meyers and his wife Sally have supported **Special Olympics Virginia** with their time and talents as volunteers, as well as with their generous financial support.

They give because of what they get back. Selfish, you say? Well, not exactly.

Like many others who give to **Special Olympics**, the Meyers have learned their philanthropy offers a return on investment unlike any other, but the gesture is one of generosity and belief in **Special Olympics Virginia's** core values—respect, inclusion and unity.

"Getting **Special Olympics** athletes integrated into their community and helping them get their powerful message heard," is what motivates him, Meyers said. "Once people experience a **Special Olympics** event, see the athletes compete and see the joy the athletes and their families get out of their participation and achievement, they'll realize what a great program it is, and how good it makes them feel. That's why we give.

"If you get a chance to hear one of **Special Olympics Virginia's Global Messengers** speak, please do. You will be impressed and convinced of the impact of the program on their lives, the lives of their families and their communities."

Dr. and Mrs. Meyers encourage others to lend their financial support to **Special Olympics**: "Giving financially is very important, but if you only give money to support the program, you are cheating yourself. Also come and experience the joy of the actual competition and achievement."

Join the Meyers in their support of Special Olympics Virginia. Contact David Thomason, Director of Individual Giving, at 800.932.GOLD x 3033 or dthomason@specialolympicsva.org.

The Olympic Spirit · Spring/Summer 2009 · 7

Yes, I want to get involved with Special Olympics Virginia!

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

Name: _____

Address: _____

City ST Zip: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

- I know someone who can benefit from Special Olympics. Please send me an athlete recruitment packet.
- Please send me volunteer information.
- I'd like more information on planned giving.
- Tell me more about corporate partnerships.
- My tax-deductible donation is: \$. _____

OUR LEGAL NAME

Special Olympics Virginia, Inc.
3212 Skipwith Road, Suite 100,
Richmond, VA 23294

PROPER BEQUEST TERMINOLOGY

"I give, devise, and bequeath to Special Olympics Virginia, Inc. the sum of \$_____ to be used for its general purposes."

- or -

"I give, devise, and bequeath to Special Olympics Virginia, Inc., for its general purposes, all (or state fraction of percentage) of the rest, residue, and remainder of my estate, both real or personal."

The Olympic Spirit

Published for the Athletes & Friends of Special Olympics Virginia



Special Olympics
Virginia

specialolympicsva.org

New e-newsletter and Web site coming soon!

On the heels of one of the most enthusiastic **Summer Games** in **Special Olympics Virginia** history, we're also excited to announce several changes on the technology front. To cut costs during this challenging economic time, the **Olympic Spirit** newsletter will move online in 2010. The last printed edition will be mailed in December.

We hope you'll want to continue to receive updates about our work in your community and around Virginia via this new format. Please visit specialolympicsva.org in the coming months and sign up for the e-newsletter, which will be delivered to your e-mail inbox. And while you're on the **Special Olympics Virginia** Web site, we hope you'll enjoy our fresh new look!

We'll be launching our completely redesigned Web site in July and we're excited about the new opportunities to highlight our athletes, volunteers, families, friends and sponsors. The new site, made possible by a matching grant from the Mary Morton Parsons Foundation, will feature easy-to-use online forms and resources, colorful photo galleries, interactive maps and much more! Later this year, we'll be redesigning our **Polar Plunge**, **Plane Pull** and **Law Enforcement Torch Run** sites so stay tuned for those enhancements, too.

Again, we look forward to serving you better at specialolympicsva.org.



specialolympicsva.org new look is coming soon.

The Olympic Spirit · Spring/Summer 2009 · 8

Please visit specialolympicsva.org
for a complete list of Community Partners.
Mailing services assisted by ICM, Inc.

- WTKR News Channel 3
- Wintergreen Resort
- Virginia Sheriff's Association
- Virginia Department Of Corrections
- Virginia Association Of Regional Jails
- Virginia Association Of Chiefs Of Police
- Law Enforcement Torch Run
- Virginia Knights of Columbus
- Virginia Natural Gas
- Tidewater Communications
- Sheetz
- RightMinds
- Macy's
- Kroger
- GEICO
- Comcast
- Booz Allen Hamilton
- Boddie Noell Enterprises, Inc.
- American Family Fitness
- 2008/2009 Statewide Partners

Special Olympics Virginia
3212 Skipwith Road, Suite 100 · Richmond, VA 23294
Phone: 804.346.5544 · Fax: 804.346.9633
Toll-free: 800.932.GOLD
info@specialolympicsva.org
specialolympicsva.org



NONPROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 1816
RICHMOND VA