

THE SPECIAL OLYMPIC OATH

"Let me win,
but if I can not win,
let me be brave in the attempt."



Heather Glysson, 18, of Farmington takes her turn in the Scooter Relay event. Glysson and teammate Steve Lynn are coached by Sue Kissinger.



Detroit Red Wing Garard Gallant took time out from his team's Stanley Cup run to join efforts with Special Olympian Meghan Adams and coach Sherry Thibodeau, representing West Bloomfield Schools.



Celebrities Ernie Harwell and Sonny Elliot share some smiles with Jeff Levanthal of Southfield prior to the start of last Sunday's 15th Annual Oakland County Special Olympics Super

Stars Competition at Oakland University's Lapey Center. The event, which included a host of local celebrities serving as team captains, raised \$95,000.

Special Day

Celebs, Special Olympians team up to win

By Jim Toth
Staff writer

To the Special Olympians it is a day for joy and jubilation. To coaches a day for hope and happiness. To participating celebrities, a day for richness and respect.

All in all, the day has become a very special one for some very special people.

Growing to heights few could ever expect, the Oakland County Special Olympics, for the 15th year, crowned its champions March 1st in its annual Super Stars Competition at Oakland University's Lapey Center.

"Everybody is a winner today," said Sue McMacken coach of Morse Elementary (Troy) representatives Angelina Cheli and Andy Steinberg. "Success is what makes this day so special. It's so enjoyable to help these kids be independent and experience such a great feeling. Everything today is so positive."

THIS YEAR'S competition featured 70 Special Olympians leading their respective team members in such events as Scooter Relay, Soccer and Obstacle Course. With more than 400 volunteers, 89 sponsors and 35 celebrities helping make it all possible, the event raised \$95,000 to be distributed directly toward Oakland County Special Olympians in the areas of training, competition, supplies and county and state tournament activities.

"Everything turned out pretty good again," beamed Nancy Joseph, area director for the Superstars competition for the past six years.

What makes this day so special for so many? According to some of the Olympians, it is the opportunity to be active. To coaches, it is a feeling of accomplishment in seeing their athletes succeed. To celebrities, a feeling of helping to touch people's

lives and producing smiles.

"I like it because I try to do my best," said Steve Lynn, 18, a member of the Farmington High School squad. "It makes me feel good to play."

"I like it because it is a fun day for me," echoed Lynn's teammate Heather Glysson. "Basketball is my favorite sport because I'm a center, but I like them all."

FOR MANY, becoming involved in Special Olympics has been quite simple and resulted in a rewarding experience.

"A parent told me about Special Olympics 17 years ago and I've been involved ever since," explained Sue Kissinger, coach of the Farmington High School representatives. "It takes a lot of hard work, but it is a lot of fun in the end."

For Kissinger, her involvement is year round.

"These kids are all in sports training programs all year round," Kissinger said. "It takes up a lot of time, but it is worth it. I see how much the kids get out of it and it's great for them."

"A long time ago a friend of mine had gone to the county games and told me how much fun it was," said McMacken, who also has been a part of the program for 17 years. "I joined her and have been involved ever since."

"It gives me a good feeling because it is fun to see these kids in a different perspective," McMacken went on. "You're just so proud of what they accomplish."

SHERRY THIBODEAU, coach of West Bloomfield School representatives Meghan Adams and Steven Karos, hasn't been involved as long as some of the rest. However, she vows to remain a part of the program for a long time to come.

"This is my fourth year and I just enjoy seeing all the kids having a good time," Thibodeau said. "The entire day is a success for everyone here."

Included in Thibodeau's definition of "everyone" is the local media and athletic personalities who serve as team captains and make the day complete.

"I've been here five years now and I get much more out of it than I give to it," said former Detroit Red Wing Ted Lindsay, a member of hockey's

Hall of Fame. "When I leave here, I'm richer than when I came in."

"It is very moving and humbling to be here," Detroit Lions coach Wayne Fontes said. "In life you have to know people will be different and you have to respect that."

The entire day was summed up best by Joseph.

"The reason all of this turns out so well is everybody is here — volunteers, parents, sponsors and, most of all, our Olympians — coming together for a common cause," she said.



Andy Steinberg, 9, of Troy is all smiles after being introduced as one of 70 Special Olympians to take part in the competition. Steinberg, along with Angelina Cheli, represented Troy's Morse Elementary School.

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