

# forerunner

FALL 2008

## Brand New Bowler Wins First Place Ribbon at Regional Games

**S**andy Nelson decided she was going to bowl. Nelson said she wanted "something to do, a reason to get out of the house and a chance to be with friends." So Nelson, 44 and a resident of Willmar, Minn., joined the Area 6 Special Olympics Minnesota team Divine House this year.

Nelson started out with traditional bowling, but with her physical disability, she found the sport extremely challenging. As a traditional bowler, she averaged no more than five points per game. When Nelson had given traditional bowling her best shot, someone recommended giving ramp bowling a try. Ramp bowling involves a two-piece unit that assists wheelchair users and those with limited strength or mobility. A light push by the bowler propels the ball down the ramp and

onto the lanes. But Nelson wasn't sure that ramp bowling was for her. She decided to go to her Special Olympics coach, Steve Sharstrom, for advice.

Sharstrom told Sandy he would fully support her decision to try ramp bowling, as he was sure she would be great! So Nelson decided to give it a go. After many weeks practicing with a ramp, Nelson took her newfound skills to the Special Olympics Minnesota Regional Bowling Tournament, which took place Oct. 25 at Kandi Entertainment Center in Willmar. Upon arriving at the tournament, Nelson found herself among 434 other Special Olympics athletes who were also there to compete.

Nelson did her best at the tournament, and after awards were presented, she walked up to her coach. Coach Sharstrom asked Nelson how she did,



HEATHER HARMER

Special Olympics Minnesota athlete Sandy Nelson competes at the 2008 State Bowling Tournament

noticing that she wasn't carrying an award. Nelson, smiling ear to ear, pulled her first place ribbon from under her shirt to surprise her coach. She scored 82 (without a handicap)! Nelson later said, "I was shocked and surprised that I won. I said 'Wow!' when I found out."

Nelson then told her coach, "I think I would like to try basketball next! Do you think I could try half court?" Sharstrom said, once again,

"Sandy, I fully support your decision, and you will be great!"

Nelson feels fortunate to have such a supportive coach. When asked about Sharstrom, she said, "He helped me out a lot. He's a nice guy. He cheers me on. He was really excited when I got first place!"

A coach, especially a Special Olympics coach, is not just someone who teaches the rules of the game, but someone who encourages athletes to

reach their full potential. Thank you to all the coaches of Special Olympics Minnesota for supporting our athletes' decisions to try new things and be the best they can be!

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# From the President's Desk

**G**reetings to all, until you see them! With this new class, we now have more than 100 Special Olympics Minnesota Global Messengers in our Athlete Leadership Programs. There are no better people to tell the Special Olympics story than our trained athletes.

It's hard to believe 2008 is coming to a close! This year has seen great performances by all of our athletes. More athletes competed at the area, regional and state levels than ever before. The number of experiences per athlete also increased, which means our athletes are participating more frequently and in a wider variety of events.

Recently, I was lucky enough to attend the graduation of 23 new Global Messengers. Wait

until you see them! With this new class, we now have more than 100 Special Olympics Minnesota Global Messengers in our Athlete Leadership Programs. There are no better people to tell the Special Olympics story than our trained athletes.

These recent weeks have brought big changes in our country. It's a challenging, yet exciting time. Our goal at Special Olympics Minnesota remains the same: to extend the availability of our program to every athlete in the state who wants to participate. Certain aspects of achieving this goal are more challenging than others, but we have been able to grow significantly these past years because of a dedicated staff, and most importantly, because of the volunteers who manage teams, coach or help out at our competitions.

We are committed to making our volunteers' lives easier by offering additional support in creating teams and expanding existing teams. Online registration, team Web sites and electronic volunteer registration are all investments we look to



Special Olympics Minnesota President Dave Dorn

PAUL EMMEL PHOTOGRAPHY

make in the near future so our key volunteers are spending less time administering and more time with athletes! With every event I attend, I am humbled by the time and energy freely given by our volunteers. Thank you for all you do.

As 2008 ends, it marks the beginning of the Polar Bear Plunge season. Our partnership with the Minnesota law enforcement community was recently recognized as one of the top 10 programs in the world! We want to make the top five in 2009, so get your Plunge team set – recruit your family, co-workers and friends! It's a fun way to start the year and really makes a difference for our programs across the state.

Congratulations to all of our athletes on a great year. Have a tremendous holiday season, and we'll see you at a Polar Bear Plunge!

Sincerely,  
Dave Dorn  
President



**EDITOR'S NOTE:**

**fore - run - ner (fôr-run/er, for-  
-) n. 1.a. One that precedes, as  
in time; a predecessor. b. An  
ancestor; a forebear. 2.a. One  
that comes before and indicates  
the approach for another; a  
harbinger. b. A warning sign or  
symptom. 3. Sports. One who  
skis the course before the  
beginning of a race. ■**

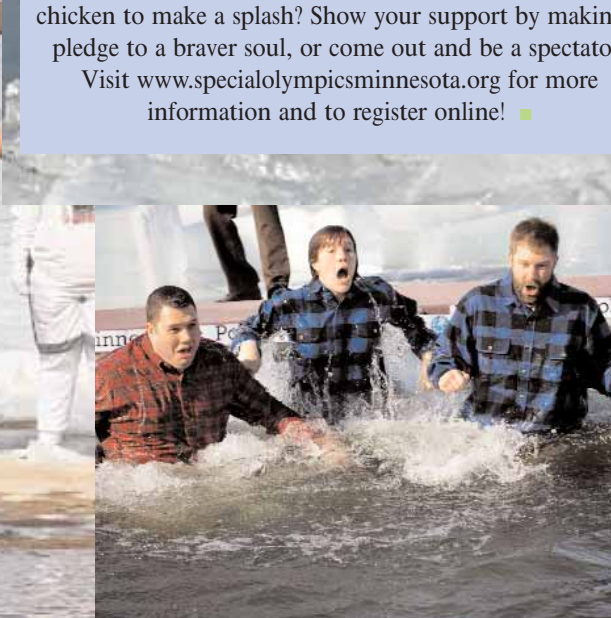
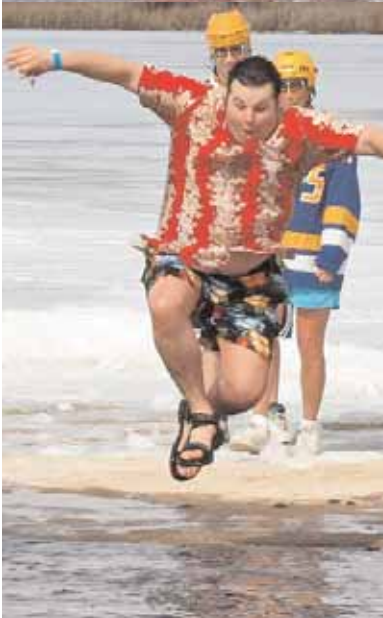
# Dare to Take the Polar Bear Plunge This Winter!



JIM MIMS PHOTOGRAPHY, JIM PANCERO PHOTOGRAPHY, TEICHRDREW PHOTOGRAPHY



**J**anuary through March, 11 plunges across the state give you the chance to be Freezin' for a Reason! The Polar Bear Plunge (presented by Minnesota Law Enforcement to benefit Special Olympics Minnesota and part of the year-round fundraising of the Law Enforcement Torch Run) is a unique opportunity for individuals, organizations and businesses to support Special Olympics athletes by jumping into frigid Minnesota waters. Too chicken to make a splash? Show your support by making a pledge to a braver soul, or come out and be a spectator! Visit [www.specialolympicsminnesota.org](http://www.specialolympicsminnesota.org) for more information and to register online! ■



## Giving as a Gift This Holiday Season

**A**s we enter the season of giving, consider making a charitable contribution your gift! One option is to ask your family and friends to give to Special Olympics Minnesota instead of giving a gift to you. Or consider setting a dollar amount that you'd like to contribute to Special Olympics Minnesota and give donations as holiday gifts for family and friends.

Many people fulfill their philanthropic goals with tax reduc-

tion in mind. If you want to take a tax deduction for charitable giving this year, your gift must be made by Dec. 31, 2008. Regardless of what type of gift you give, donating before the end of the year qualifies you for a charitable deduction as long as you itemize your deductions when filing your taxes.

There are so many ways to give! Consider a gift of appreciated stock or real estate that you have owned longer than one year. These

types of gifts avoid capital gains taxes, and you can usually deduct the full appreciated value of the gift. Unlike writing a check, these gifts take more time to complete. Be sure to plan ahead if you want to take a deduction this year!

Make giving your gift this season by making a charitable donation before the end of the year. If you have further questions, please contact Pam Byrd at 612-604-1250 or via e-mail at [byrdp@somn.org](mailto:byrdp@somn.org). ■



PAUL EMMEL PHOTOGRAPHY

Special Olympics Minnesota athlete and The RAVE team member Adam Eisele celebrates at the 2008 Summer Games

## Healthy Athletes Clinical Directors Needed

**T**he Special Olympics Healthy Athletes® program was created to provide health care to people with intellectual disabilities – a medically underserved population. By holding free screenings at competitions, Special Olympics Minnesota is working to provide the health care athletes need; but without Clinical Directors, Healthy Athletes would not exist.

Clinical Directors oversee the program, decide on necessary supplies, recruit volunteers (usually medical students) and serve as medical liaisons between Special Olympics Minnesota and athletes. A variety of medical professions is represented by Special



PAUL EMMEL PHOTOGRAPHY

Healthy Hearing screening at the 2008 Summer Games

Olympics Minnesota's Clinical Director's team, including: dietitians, doctors, nurses, personal trainers, podiatrists and optometrists.

Special Olympics Minnesota would like to add Healthy Athletes offerings at state-level competitions, increase area and regional offerings, and expand the program to

include follow-up care after basic screenings. We can't make this happen without additional Clinical Directors!

If you are a medical professional interested in becoming a Healthy Athletes Clinical Director, please contact Heather Harmer at 612-604-1276 or via e-mail at [harmerh@somn.org](mailto:harmerh@somn.org). ■

### QUICK LOOK:

Win a Free Trip to World Games in Idaho Feb. 7-13, 2009!

Special Olympics Inc.'s Global Partner, The Coca-Cola Company, launched a promotion on the My Coke Rewards Web site to raise awareness for Special Olympics and the 2009 Special Olympics World Winter Games. Through My Coke Rewards, consumers have the opportunity to win rewards and enter sweepstakes by purchasing participating Coca-Cola products. The promotion will run through Dec. 1, 2008, giving people the opportunity to enter a sweepstakes and win a prize that includes a trip to the 2009 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Boise, Idaho, along with a ski package! Visit the My Coke Rewards Web site at [www.mycokerewards.com](http://www.mycokerewards.com) (look for the black Special Olympics sphere on the right-hand side of the page) for all the details. ■

## Special Olympics Minnesota Athlete Accepts Youth Award

**D**anielle Liebl is rising to the top! Since joining Special Olympics Minnesota nearly five years ago, Liebl has taken enormous steps to improving her community as well as advancing the quality of life for people with disabilities. As a result, Nov. 6, 2008, she was presented with the Minnesota State Council on Disabilities Youth Award. This award is given to one young person in the state of Minnesota for working to improve the lives of oth-

ers in her or his community.

Liebl was nominated for this award by her seventh and eighth grade teacher Rachel Neutzling. Neutzling has witnessed Liebl's passion for helping others not only by being her teacher but by also her school swimming coach and helping with the local Special Olympics Minnesota area swim meet.

Liebl participates in the Special Olympics Minnesota Athlete

Leadership Programs as well and has recently had opportunities that included participating in the 2008 Adrian Peterson Golf Tournament. She was also featured in KARE-11's "Perk at Play" segment with Eric Perkins. Liebl will attend the 2009 World Youth Summit at the Special Olympics Winter World Games in Idaho next February as well.

Most recently, Liebl helped to round up an astonishing 65 golfers to participate in a local golf



HEATHER HARMER

Special Olympics Minnesota athlete and Global Messenger Danielle Liebl (right) and ROCORI coach Shelly Hoyt (left) accept their awards

tournament and raised \$4,400 for her ROCORI Special Olympics team. There's no doubt as to

why Liebl was chosen for this prestigious award. Congratulations, Danielle! ■

## Change the Conversation: Stop Using the "R-Word"



**S**pecial Olympic Minnesota athlete Roberta Blomster recently stood up for a cause she believes in: the dignity of the 6,000 Minnesota athletes with intellectual disabilities who compete in Special Olympics. If you ask Blomster, the "r-word" is more than just a word drawn from the outdated classification of "mental retardation." It's hate speech. Blomster, as well as

many other individuals and organizations such as Special Olympics, Inc., Arc and ACT (Advocating Change Together), are working hard to eliminate the use of the "r-word" and encourage more respectful terminology in communities throughout the world.

Recently, Blomster was listening to one of her favorite radio stations, 101.3 KDWB, and was upset when she heard one of the DJs use the

"r-word."

In response, Blomster sent an e-mail to the "Dave Ryan in the Morning show," thanking KDWB for the 5K race it was sponsoring to raise funds for Special Olympics Minnesota. Most importantly, she explained that she was a Special Olympics Minnesota athlete, and that the use of the "r-word" is hurtful and wrong. Blomster wrote that she hoped that

KDWB's involvement with Special Olympics Minnesota "sends [them] in the right direction to no longer be saying this word."

As a result, the "Dave Ryan in the Morning" show staff sent a reply to Blomster, apologizing for the use of the term and making a pledge to stop using it.

A few weeks after Blomster wrote her e-mail, a director of the "Dave Ryan in the Morning" show used the "r-word" and was quickly informed by Dave Ryan on air that the term was no longer

to be used by any members of their staff.

This is a great example of how one person can make a difference! Our choice of language frames how we think about people, especially people who are different from ourselves. Thanks to athlete leaders like Blomster, the "r-word" is on its way out!

Change the conversation, and stop using the "r-word" today. Log on to [www.r-word.org](http://www.r-word.org), and make a pledge to respect and value people with intellectual disabilities. ■

## Give Back to Your Community with Special Olympics Minnesota

Looking for a way to give back to your community, but you're on a tight budget? Special Olympics Minnesota depends on generous donations from private citizens and corporations to run its programs. But not all the contributions that keep Special Olympics Minnesota on its feet are cash and checks. "In-kind giving" is the donation of goods and services that are of value to a nonprofit organization. Businesses do it, corporations do it and so do individual donors!

There are a variety of ways to get involved. For example, Special Olympics Minnesota hands out more than 35,000 meals throughout the year to better serve athletes at competitions. If you're in the restaurant industry, consider making a donation of boxed lunches or dinners. We have events large and small to cater throughout the year!

Printing is another one of Special Olympics Minnesota's expenses. If you have paper to give

or ink to spare, we're happy to put it to good use! Do you work for a printing company? We appreciate the donation of any print job, whether you can run 100 sheets or 100,000.

Special Olympics Minnesota also depends on the donation of items for live and silent auctions to raise money for its programs. Gift certificates, show tickets, books, paintings – all are great ideas for an auction donation.

You don't have to manage a business or have access to the latest concert

tickets to make an impact, however. Special Olympics Minnesota accepts contributions of stickers, pens, T-shirts, stuffed animals and more as give-away items for athletes. When times are tough, creativity is appreciated! To make an in-kind donation, please contact Elizabeth Reddall at 612-604-1283 or via e-mail at [reddalle@somn.org](mailto:reddalle@somn.org).

Most importantly, Special Olympics Minnesota values the gift of time. More than 14,000 volunteers ensure that the year-round sports,

leadership and health opportunities for adults and children with intellectual disabilities continue to be available to those who want to participate. Whether you have a little time to commit or a lot, there is a volunteer opportunity waiting for you any time of the year. For more information, please visit our Web site at [www.specialolympicsminnesota.org](http://www.specialolympicsminnesota.org).

Thank you for your continued support! ■

## GLOBETROTTING: *Special Olympics Australia*

Special Olympics Australia, established in 1976, serves 4,500 athletes in a country that is also the world's smallest continent. About 1,000 people volunteer for Special Olympics Australia per week, providing sports training and competition in 46 regions. In Australia, there are 12 official Special Olympics sports: athletics, basketball, bocce, cricket, golf, gymnastics, sailing, soccer, softball, swimming, tennis and ten-pin bowling. In October 2007, Special Olympics Australia sent the largest and most successful Australian team ever to the World Summer Games in Shanghai, China. One-hundred and twenty-seven athletes from all over Australia competed. Our friends down under are looking

forward to the next Special Olympics National Games, which will be held in Adelaide, South Australia in 2010!

To learn more about Special Olympics Australia, visit their Web site at [www.specialolympics.com.au](http://www.specialolympics.com.au). ■



## Upstream Arts: Moving Against the Current

**F**ounded in 2006 by Matt and Julie Guidry, the mission of Upstream Arts is to enhance the lives of adults and youth with disabilities by fostering creative communication and social independence through the power of arts education. Programs engage participants by utilizing theatre, music, poetry, dance and visual arts. Based in Minneapolis, Upstream Arts offers programming for individuals, schools and agencies.

According to Executive Director Julie Guidry in a quote taken from Upstream Arts' fall newsletter, "Art is used because we know that 93 percent of effective communication is nonverbal, and that there are more than words to tell someone how you feel. We use art because we know that



*Upstream Arts, based in Minneapolis, offers arts programming for adults and children with disabilities*

colors can express that you're sad, angry, excited or relieved. We know that the beat of a drum can reflect your mood and the wave of your arms and the hop in your step can tell a story. We use art because it allows us, all of us, to explore the diversity of communication and self-expression."

Local artists facilitate Upstream Arts' programs. Lorissa Gottschalk, a local writer, has enjoyed spending time with program participants and is

quoted on the Upstream Web site: "Working with the participants at Upstream Arts has reminded me that life, like art, is not about perfection. Rather, it's about exploration, adaptation and a willingness to respond to life's unpredictable challenges collaboratively, uniquely and creatively."

To learn more about Upstream Arts or to find out about their upcoming programs, please visit their Web site at [www.upstreamarts.org](http://www.upstreamarts.org) or call 612-331-4584. ■

SUBMITTED PHOTO

## COMMUNITY EVENTS:

### 30th Anniversary Community Celebration

*Wilderness Inquiry*

**When:** Dec. 6, 7-10 p.m.

**Contact:** [info@wildernessinquiry.org](mailto:info@wildernessinquiry.org), 612-676-9400

**Where:** Wilderness Inquiry Warehouse, 808 14th Avenue SE, Minneapolis, Minn.

### Connect with Courage Tour

*Courage Center*

**When:** Dec. 18, 10-11 a.m.

**Contact:** [kathleen.hayes@couragecenter.org](mailto:kathleen.hayes@couragecenter.org), 763-520-0255

**Where:** Courage Center, 3915 Golden Valley Road, Minneapolis, Minn.

### Social Skills and the Arts

*Upstream Arts*

**When:** Jan. 8, 15, 22, 29 & Feb. 5, 7-8:30 p.m.

**Contact:** [info@upstreamarts.org](mailto:info@upstreamarts.org), 612-331-4584

**Where:** Todd Park, 4429 Vandervork Avenue, Edina, Minn.

### Social Success in the Community and Beyond

*The Autism Society of Minnesota*

**When:** Jan. 21, 7-9 p.m.

**Contact:** [ldixon@ausm.org](mailto:ldixon@ausm.org), 651-647-1083

**Where:** Autism Society of Minnesota, 2380 Wycliff Street, Suite 102, St. Paul, Minn. ■

## BOOK CORNER: *Blue ribbon reading for, by and about people with intellectual disabilities*

### **Adapt My World** By J. Rose Plaxen

*Adapt My World* by J. Rose Plaxen is a one-of-a-kind handbook filled with simple activity adaptations for people with intellectual disabilities. Plaxen is a Special Olympics assistant athletics coach in Maryland. Garrie Barnes (one of Plaxen's athletes) writes the following review: *Adapt My World* is a book of ideas to make everyday life easier for people with disabilities. Plaxen used a lot of these ideas to help her daughter, Loren, who was born with disabilities. The book has three sections: Home, Play and School. Each page is set up like a recipe and has a place for notes. All of the strategies adapt everyday items, such as foam hair curlers, Velcro, tape, glue and so on. Plaxen has written an extremely helpful book ... ■



# upcoming events

- **Leadership Conference . . . . . Jan. 16-18**  
Minneapolis Airport Hilton, Bloomington
- **Distinguished Service Awards . . . . . Jan. 17**  
Minneapolis Airport Hilton, Bloomington
- **Northland 300 . . . . . Jan. 21-25**  
Two Harbors, Ely
- **Area 3 Poly Hockey Competition . . . . . Jan. 24**  
Washington Center, Duluth
- **Area 11 Poly Hockey Competition . . . . . Jan. 31**  
Breck School, Minneapolis
- **Duluth Polar Bear Plunge . . . . . Jan. 31**  
Lakeside at Canal Park
- **White Bear Lake Polar Bear Plunge . . . Jan. 31**  
White Bear Lake VFW
- **Willmar/Spicer Polar Bear Plunge . . . . . Jan. 31**  
Melvin's on the Lake, Spicer
- **Rochester Polar Bear Plunge . . . . . Feb. 14**  
Whistle Binkies Olde World Pub – North
- **St. Peter Polar Bear Plunge . . . . . Feb. 15**  
Hallet's Pond
- **Maple Grove Polar Bear Plunge . . . . . Feb. 21**  
Weaver Lake
- **Alexandria Polar Bear Plunge . . . . . Feb. 28**  
Bug-a-Boo Bay
- **South Metro Polar Bear Plunge . . . . . Feb. 28**  
Lac Lavon, Lakeville
- **Winter Games . . . . . Feb. 27-28, March 1**  
Afton, Hastings, Plymouth



## forerunner

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