



**Special Olympics**

*Montana*

# Spirit

May 2006

**Athlete Leadership Programs Special Edition ♦ 2006 State Summer Games**



*Great Falls Ambassadors to the State Summer Games: Denise Almanza, Erica Petrilli, Jennifer Bodner, Jamie Darko and Stephanie Rowley.*

## **Special Olympics Mission**

Special Olympics is a nonprofit, international program of year-round sports training and athletic competition for children and adults with intellectual disabilities.

## **Climbing the ALPs in Montana Supported by the Oro Y Plata Foundation**

### ***Athlete Leaders – Magical!***

Special Olympics has come a long way since the early days. Not that athletes train or complete less. More than 2000 athletes in Montana give their all to training and intense competition the year around. New opportunities for athletes, however, are expanding the ways we look at Special Olympics success. We have embraced change in Montana with the Athlete Leadership Programs

(ALPs) where athletes add an array of leadership experiences to their athletic endeavors.

You will note in this publication the power of athletes stepping beyond sports into the challenge of leadership. We are awed by them as they prepare speeches, become media voices, serve on the Board of Directors, assist with coaching, even train one another in leadership skills. It really is *a kind of magic.*

## Tim Detmers: Humorist

He is a bit of a ham at the microphone, and Great Falls is enjoying it. Tim Detmers, Great Falls Hornets athlete, got the 2006 State Summer Games rolling in his home community as Master of Ceremonies at the kickoff press conference in February. With script in hand, Tim masterfully kept the event moving. But his unscripted remarks about an honored guest will be remembered most.

Ray Zukowski, N.E.W.'s Senior Vice President of Operations, came from N.E.W. headquarters in Virginia to highlight his company's premier sponsorship of the 2006 State Summer Games. Like every good emcee, Tim focused on correctly pronouncing names. Mr. Zukowski could have been a challenge, to be sure. But Tim smoothly made the introduction, noting that "Mr. Zukowski must come from a zoo where they have cows that *ski*." How's that for taking care of a tough pronunciation, and entertaining your audience, too?!



Tim Detmers grabs the attention of the press.

## Emcee Chrissy Siefke

Chrissy Siefke, bubbling with trademark enthusiasm, barely kept her emotions in check when invited to co-emcee the 2006 Opening Ceremonies. "Oh, no! You mean it?! I am *thrilled!* I have *always* wanted to do this!"

From her home in Kalispell where she trains with the Flathead Industries team, Chrissy was quick to accept. She has earned the honor. For the past two years, Chrissy shared the podium as co-emcee for the annual Distinguished Service Awards Banquet. During the 2004 event, Chrissy had no problem measuring up to her co-emcee Ian Marquand of KPAX-TV/Missoula – no small task given both his height *and* profession-

alism. In 2005, she and SOMT Board member Steve Brookstein kept the audience chuckling with their antics. We look forward to Chrissy's debut as 2006 Opening Ceremonies co-emcee where she and Dave Wilson of Fisher Broadcasting lead the charge.



Emcee Chrissy Siefke, Kalispell, and SOMT CEO Bob Norbie at 2005 Distinguished Service Awards Banquet

## Torch Run Athlete Ambassadors

The law enforcement officers who engineer Montana's wildly successful Torch Run program figured out five years ago that a strong athlete presence would multiply their effect. So they created an Athlete Ambassador position, a role for which athletes are nominated by their coaches and local volunteers. Each year, an athlete is selected from the nominees to serve a three-year term.

Outgoing Ambassador **Tawny Gray** from Missoula takes leadership seriously. She concluded her term recently, generously praising the time she spent working with law enforcement. "I enjoyed this so much – working with officers like Jason Johnson (Missoula County Sheriff's Office) and attending the international conferences." Tawny was also honored in



Athlete Ambassadors Vivienne Shockley and Tawny Gray, with Levi Talkington, Lewistown Police Dept, and Jerry Williams, MT Law Enforcement Academy

2004 as SOMT Athlete of the Year, and aspires to continue in leadership roles throughout the organization.

**Vivienne Shockley**, Billings, was one of Montana's early Global Messengers, having trained extensively in the popular public speaking program. She is a seasoned public speaker now, and a current LETR Athlete Ambassador. According to Vivi, "Being ambassador means I speak not just for myself, but for athletes who can't speak for themselves."

## Special Smiles

It's hard to imagine a smile more special than that of **Ruschelle Tyvand**, Butte. A former SOMT Athlete of the Year and incoming Torch Run Athlete Ambassador, Ruschelle smiles big and it's contagious. So it is entirely fitting that Ruschelle spoke recently before the Montana State Dental Convention in Helena.

What's the real connection? This year, Dr. Steve Perlman from Boston University was invited to speak to the gathered dentists. That's significant to Special Olympics Montana because Dr. Perlman helped originate *Special Smiles*, a key component of the Special Olympics worldwide initiative known as Healthy Athletes®. The program provides much-needed health screening and education to SO athletes. Dr. Perlman requested that an SOMT Global



*Dr. Andy Pickens, Billings; Ruschelle Tyvand, Butte; Dr. Steve Perlman, Boston University; Cheri Seed, MT Department Public Health and Human Services at the 2006 Montana State Dental Convention. Messenger also be included in the agenda. So Ruschelle made the trip.*

With this event, Ruschelle can include *advocate* in her lengthy list of accomplishments. She spoke sincerely about her own medical challenges and the care she has gotten, care that she says has been good. But she also pointed out that,

“Most Special Olympics athletes are not as lucky as I am.” She continued, “When you offer free clinics, Special Olympics athletes can get the help they need.” Ruschelle finished with thanks to the clinicians who help, saying, “You all deserve a gold medal for volunteering your time.” Well said.

## Global Athlete Congress in Panama

It was a long shot when Josh Anderson, Troy, was nominated to the 2005 Global Athlete Congress. Fewer than 70 athletes were to be chosen from Special Olympics programs in 35 countries worldwide.

The requirements were stiff - extensive preparation on issues important to the future of Special Olympics and effective information gathering from fellow athletes to represent them well.



*Josh Anderson, Troy, at Global Athlete Congress in Panama with Ryuzo Ogasawara, representative from Japan.*

International travel, in this case to Panama. Patience and concentration in a multi-language setting.

With versatile experience as a member of the SOMT Board of Directors, a busy public

speaker and an active athlete, Josh was ready for the challenge. That's not to say, however, that he wasn't thrilled to the point of speechlessness when chosen. Josh picked up the phone, got the news, and said nothing. A dramatic pause, then, “Wait a minute. I have to tell my mom. *Mom...MOM...!!*”

That, however, was the end of Josh's silence. After that, it was serious preparation for deliberation and voting on tough issues like minimum standards for training and competition. Josh spoke well for Montana at the 2005 Global Athlete Congress, and enjoyed invaluable exposure to international cultures. He has helped shape the Special Olympics movement into the future.

## ALPs in the Summer....

Athletes across Montana will participate in Athlete Input Sessions during summer 2006. At these sessions, topics chosen by the athletes will be deliberated upon and recommendations made to SOMT Board and staff. The sessions are carefully facilitated by individuals who help frame the discussion without influencing opinions. Representatives from each session will attend the 2006 Fall Leadership Conference in September to continue the deliberations.

Special Olympics Montana programs are made possible in part by the generous contributions of these foundations:

**Oro y Plata Foundation**

**Joseph N. Blankenbaker Charitable Foundation**

**Burlington Resources Foundation**

**Charlotte Y. Martin Foundation**

**Kingsbury Memorial Foundation**

## ALPs Leaders Everywhere

Limited space makes it impossible to feature every SOMT athlete leader. More than 75 athletes have trained as Global Messengers alone, and regularly speak to groups and organizations all over the state. Here's a quick look at a few recent ALPs happenings.

**Kerrie Sheets**, Billings, appeared at the 2006 Montana Business Professionals of America state conference where she spoke to 800 high school students interested in business marketing. She accepted a generous check raised by the students for SOMT from their Chain of Love fundraiser.

**Stephanie Rowley**, Great Falls, gave a prepared speech and then fielded questions about her SO experience from fourth grade students at Roosevelt Elementary in GF recently. She was there to support the students' Adopt-A-Special-Olympics-Team project.



*Daisy Motschenbacher takes the mic at KGPR Public Radio.*

**Kelly Stoick**, **Daisy Motschenbacher** and **Tim Detmers**, Great Falls, made a trip to KGPR Public Radio in Great Falls to record public service announcements about the 2006 State Summer Games. The PSA's aired during the weeks leading up to the Games.

**Kenneth Hedrich**, Bozeman, is SOMT's 2006 Athlete of the Year. He carries the Special Olympics Flame of



*Mike Schaff, Helena, extends a welcome at the State Basketball Tournament families dinner.*

Hope into Opening Ceremonies Wednesday, May 17, igniting the Games cauldron to officially start the Games.

**Jamie Darko**, Great Falls, is one of nine athletes selected nationwide to carry the torch into Opening Ceremonies at the first-ever USA National Games in Ames, Iowa from July 2-9, 2006.

**Anne Trout**, Kalispell, completes a three-year term on the SOMT Board of Directors in 2006 where she has participated in decision-making on behalf of SOMT athletes.



*Kelly Stoick records a public service announcement at KGPR radio.*