



Special Olympics Howard County

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Contact SOHO Today



August 2026 Newsletter - Issue #5

Fall Sports Registration Closed for Most Sports

Registration for fall sports is now closed, except for bowling and The Young Athletes Program (YAP). Bowling registration is full, but athletes can register and be added to the wait list through September 1st. YAP registration will close on August 21st. Go to our [website](#) to register for bowling or YAP.



Inspiration Walk - Have you set up your fundraising page yet?

2026 marks the 25th anniversary of the Special Olympics Howard County Inspiration Walk. To celebrate this special milestone, the walk is moving to the Columbia Merriweather District's Color Burst Park (where the ice rink is in the winter) and will be held on Saturday, September 12, 2026. The 1.25 mile walk will go from Color Burst through Merriweather's Symphony Woods. Lots of giveaways are planned for registered walkers including a special commemorative pin celebrating 25 years. [Click here](#) to donate, register and set up your fundraising page.

The Inspiration Walk is an important fundraiser that allows us to provide year round sports training and competition for athletes with intellectual disabilities free of charge. We rely on the generosity of contributors to pay for competition, uniforms, equipment and facilities. Are you the parent of a Special Olympics athlete? Just think

Office Hours

Monday/Friday 8:30 - 1:30

Tuesday 1:30 - 6:30

Sport Seasons		When to Register*
 Winter	Jan-Mar	November
 Spring	Apr-Jun	February
 Summer	Jun-Sep	May
 Fall	Aug-Nov	July
*Exact dates to be announced in newsletter & on website		

Sports Coordinator Needed

After 12 years, Gigi Sheltraw has stepped down as coordinator for basketball 3v3PD. The success of the 3v3PD group is in large part due to Gigi's dedication to the athletes. A new coordinator is needed to continue that success.

of all the benefits your athlete has gained through Special Olympics – improved physical fitness, the opportunity to compete, increased self-confidence, new friendships. This is your opportunity to give back and participate in a fun day with other Special Olympics families.

When you register to walk, the system automatically sets up a fundraising page for you and will send an email to you with information to access your fundraising page. All you need to do is send the link to your page to your family and friends. It's an easy and secure way to donate via credit card. Donations can also be sent by check to Special Olympics Howard County, 8970 Route 108, Suite A1, Columbia, MD 21045.

Mark your calendar for September 12th. We've love to see you at this important event!

Volunteers Needed for Inspiration Walk

It's all hands on deck for the Inspiration Walk! It takes a lot of volunteers to run the event. If you'd like to volunteer, **click here** to sign up. Student volunteers are welcome -- volunteering at the walk can count toward your community service hours.



Texas Roadhouse Supports Special Olympics

Looking for a place to eat out? Go to Texas Roadhouse where you can enjoy a great meal and support

Special Olympics at the same time. From August 12th through September 15th, Texas Roadhouse will have a round-up campaign. As a thank you, anyone who rounds up their check will receive a \$5 card that can be used for appetizers.

The best night to go will be September 10th when Texas Roadhouse will host a "Dine to Donate" night; a percentage of the business for that night will be donated to Special Olympics. You'll also see Texas

If you are interested in being a Sports Coordinator for basketball 3v3PD, send an email to info@somdhc.org.

Volunteer Corner

Looking for a place to volunteer? Want to feel the joy of watching athletes with intellectual disabilities work hard and excel in the various sports? Need to earn Community Service Requirements for high school graduation or church requirements? Whether you are looking for a few hours a week or month or a larger commitment, whether you can help with administrative/office work, fundraising or want to work hands-on coaching the athletes, Special Olympics Howard County can use you!

If you're ready to dive in, check out our website for all the details on how to get started as a volunteer: **Become a Volunteer**. Parents are highly encouraged to attend an orientation to learn more about SOHO.

The next volunteer orientations will be on Tuesday, August 18 and Tuesday, September 22, both from 7-8pm.

For further information, send an email to info@somdhc.org.

SOHO Merchandise Store

Want to show your Special Olympics spirit by proudly sporting SOHO gear? Looking for a gift for your athlete or family supporters? Check out the new Special Olympics Howard County online merchandise store! Items available include hoodies, jackets, backpacks, hats and much more. To order, **click here**. We also have some SOHO baseball hats for sale. They are \$10.00 each and can be purchased at the office. We also have some folding chairs and rain ponchos on hand. These items can be purchased at the SOHO office. Stop by during office hours to see samples of some items.

Roadhouse at the Inspiration Walk. They will support the walkers by providing lemonade, peanuts and discount cards. Be sure to stop by and say hello to their mascot, Andy.



Pickleball Season Wrap Up

by Maria Docal and Nancy Hartka

What an incredible pickleball season! With approximately 70 athletes participating on June 28, our program continues to grow and thrive. We were excited to welcome several new athletes to the court this season, many of whom made impressive strides in their skills and confidence.

We're proud that nearly half of our athletes competed at the State Championships, bringing home medals across multiple events including skills, unified play, traditional doubles, and even singles competitions. Throughout the season, many athletes progressed from skills-based training to competitive games, a testament to their hard work and dedication. This year also marked a milestone as we hosted Howard County's first-ever pickleball qualifier, showcasing tremendous sportsmanship from all participants. A huge thank you to our amazing volunteers who made this season possible!

Special thanks to Maria Docal and Nancy Hartka for co-coordinating Pickleball again this year!!

Thank You Bob Sans!!

Five years ago, Bob Sans (pictured here with PB co-coordinator Maria Docal), approached the SOHO management team with a proposal to start Pickleball for our Special Olympians. We gave the go ahead and the rest is history. Bob recruited volunteers from the Howard County PB club, he worked deals to get equipment donated, he secured amazing facilities, he enlisted the help of folks connected to PB at national level, he spread the word and trained other counties in the state in order for them to start programs and most importantly, he brought joy and happiness to our athletes who have benefited from a first class sport for all these years.



We wish Bob well as he is stepping aside as Head Coach, but SOHO will be forever grateful for the program he created. Thank you Bob for bringing Pickleball to Special Olympics, not only in our county, but for the entire state of Maryland as well.

Show your Special Olympics pride while celebrating the country's 250th anniversary. Check out the new red, white and blue hat in the Merchandise Store.



Medical Support Needed - Find Out More

Do you have a medical or nursing degree? Are you an EMT? We are in need of medical support staff to assist at competitions. You would be asked to attend a competition two to three times a year to provide medical assistance, if needed. If you think you may be interested, contact our Medical Coordinator, Jackie Miller, at chitchat1955@gmail.com.

Car Donations Benefit SOHO

Through the efforts of longtime coach and volunteer, Duke Silvea, Special Olympics can now accept car donations to benefit our program. If you have a car you would like to donate, please use this [link](#) and select Howard County as the recipient of the funds.

Photos of Our Athletes

You can enjoy photos of our athletes at practice, competitions and other events on our photo [page](#).

Newsletter Information

If you are an athlete, parent or caregiver, we highly recommend that you do not Unsubscribe from this newsletter. You will miss valuable information about seasonal sports registration, policies, highlights,

Management Team Update

After nine years as serving as our Fundraising Chair, Cole Schnorf is stepping down from this role at the conclusion of the Inspiration Walk. We thank Cole for his gift of time and the many connections he brought to our organization through the Howard County Chamber of Commerce and local government. Well done Cole!!

We are lucky to have Jessie Hayes volunteer to take on the fundraising role! Jessie worked many years for SOMD and was in charge of their Polar Bear Plunge event. Jessie currently works fundraising roles with the Ulman Foundation and has stepped into our fundraising position with Cole this summer to transition into the job. Thanks Jessie!



Important Changes to Athlete Medical Form - ACTION NEEDED FOR EVERY ATHLETE

The current athlete medical form has been discontinued and is replaced by the new **U.S. Athlete Registration Form** ([click here](#)). Important features of the new form:

- Physician signature NOT required for sports participation and competition within Maryland
- Medical questions are completed by parent/guardian/caregiver
- Waivers combined with only 1 signature needed
- Typed signatures are not accepted; electronic signatures such as DocuSign are accepted
- All old medical forms expired on 06/30/2026. Don't wait, download and complete the new form today
- New forms should be signed, scanned and submitted to info@somdhc.org or sent to the office by 06/30/2026
- The U.S. Athlete Registration Form must be updated annually

Questions? Call the office at 410-740-0500 or send an email info@somdhc.org

activities and other relevant information. Please add info@somdhc.org and bobbaker@somdhc.org email addresses to your address book so that this letter does not go into your Junk Mail folder. If you have any suggestions or questions about the newsletter, please let us know at info@somdhc.org.