



Special Olympics Howard County

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[Contact SOHO Today](#)



January 2025 Newsletter - Issue #1

HAPPY NEW YEAR, GET READY TO REGISTER FOR SPRING SPORTS!!!!

While winter sports are in full gear, it's almost time to register for Spring sports! Registration for Athletics (track and field), Bocce, Cheerleading, Spirit Fitness, Poms, Hip Hop, Dance, Pickleball, Softball, Swimming and the Young Athletes Program opens February 3, 2025 on our website at www.somdhc.org.

2024: Another Great Year for Special Olympics Howard County

Highlights from 2024 include the following:

Winter Sports Season:

- Several family members and volunteers did the Polar Bear Plunge raising over \$16K for SOHO.
- Hosted six basketball league play days at Glenelg Country School (GCS) for 3x3 Player Development, 3x3 Traditional, 5x5 Player Development and 5x5 Traditional and hosted SOMD required qualifiers at GCS for 3x3, 3x3PD, 5x5PD, and skills.
- 22 athletes participated in SOMD Winter Games which returned to the Wisp Ski Resort.

Spring Sports Season:

- Hosted our 23rd annual Inspiration Walk, raising \$104K
- Hosted over 110 athletes at our swimming competition at the heated Stephens Forest pool
- Hosted a track competition at Wilde Lake High School for over 200 athletes
- Held an inspiring MATP Challenge Day event at Cedar Lane School
- Over almost SOHO athletes attended SOMD Summer Games at Towson University participating in Bocce, Cheerleading, Dance, Softball, Swimming and Track.
- Held our 3rd successful Pickleball season and demonstrated the sport at Summer Games. This will officially become a Summer Games sport in 2025 thanks to the persistence of our Coach, Bob Sans.

Summer/Fall Sports Seasons:

- Held a SOHO Night at Oriole Park to watch the Birds
- Hosted golf competitions at Turf Valley and Timbers at Troy golf courses
- Held our 4th annual Over the Edge Fundraiser, grossing \$123K
- Hosted a powerlifting competition at 12 Labours CrossFit

Office Hours

Monday/Thursday 8:30 - 1:30

Tuesday 1:30 - 6:30

Weather Related Practice Cancellations

Athletes, Coaches, Families and Volunteers: Be sure to familiarize yourself with our protocol for [Weather Related Practice Cancellations](#). (We've already had a number of them this season already!)

Volunteer Corner

Our 2025 winter season has just started. If you would like to volunteer for one or more of these sports, basketball (5 levels), bowling, alpine skiing or snowshoeing, we would love to welcome you and your families and friends. We also need help with one day competitions.

As the winter weather starts to sweep in, The team is behind the scenes getting ready to step into Spring with the 2025 Special Olympics Howard County Inspiration Walk, We will be looking for volunteers to help make this event a success.

- Held a cross country competition at Reservoir High School
- Sent two athletes to the Special Olympics National Invitational in Kansas
- Hosted four league play dates in soccer and four in flag football
- Attended SOMD Fall Fest at Mount Saint Mary's University and Soccer Finals with over 200 athletes.
- Hosted the regional bowling tournament at Bowlero Normandy Lanes
- Hosted a Volleyball competition with teams from Virginia at the Maryland Junior Sports Center.

Each of these events, in addition to training in each of these seasons, required a tremendous amount of behind-the-scenes planning and paperwork. Many thanks to our management team, coaches, and other volunteers who make this happen. This volunteer-run organization has much to be proud of, and we are grateful for everyone involved.

If you haven't been involved before, come join us. There are lots of ways you can be involved. See the Volunteer Corner to learn more about various opportunities.

Join the Polar Bear Plunge Excitement

It's not too late to join our **SOHO Sponsor, Allan Homes Unlimited**, and jump into the icy waters at at Sandy Point State Park to support our athletes. Join our team on **Saturday, February 1st** for a day of dancing, live music, food, and a quick dip in the Chesapeake Bay. You can join the team [here](#) by clicking on **Join Team**, then click on **Fundraise to Plunge**, then click on **the + sign (1)**, and then pay \$10 via credit card to join the team. After you join the team, Allan will donate \$100.00 to your page. Challenge friends and family members to join you in this annual exciting and fun filled event or to contribute to your fundraising page. If a cold swim is not for you, you can still support members of our team by donating directly to Allan Homes Unlimited Plunge page. **SOHO will receive 70% of the funds raised.** Plan ahead to shake up your winter doldrums, get outside and have some winter fun by joining our team now. Remember, ankles count!



Volunteer Student Scholarship Information

High school seniors and college students who have been committed to the Special Olympics Howard County program as a volunteer and advocate of the athletes can apply to three scholarships provided through the generosity of three families.

- The **Jackie Burk Memorial Scholarship** (up to \$1,500) was created by Jack and Linda Burk in memory of their daughter, Jackie, a special friend and volunteer to Special Olympics Howard County.
- The **Allan Homes Scholarship** (up to \$1,500) was created in 2006 by Allan and Kathy Waschak. Formerly open only to student volunteers in the swimming program, it is now open to student volunteers in any of our sports programs.

High school students, listen up! Are you looking for a golden opportunity for you to rack up those community service hours while having a great time. Who knew volunteering could be this much fun? 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](#).

Got questions? Don't hesitate to reach out to Rachel at rmaddockcosden@somdhc.org. She's the friendly face behind all things volunteer-related! Let's make some magic happen together! You can also call the office at 410-740-0500 for more information. The process to become a volunteer is to attend a volunteer orientation that we hold once a month at the SOHO office, along with a volunteer application and two online training courses (Protective Behaviors and Concussion). **Future Volunteer Orientations will be held on Monday, February 10th, and Thursday, March 13th at the SOHO office.** We look forward to having you join us.

SOHO Merchandise Store is Now Open!

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.

- **The Schnorf Family Scholarship** (up to \$1,500) was created in 2018 by Cole and Joan Schnorf to honor outstanding student volunteers.

The deadline for submitting applications for the **2025 Outstanding Student Volunteers Scholarships** is **March 29, 2025**. Applications can be dropped off at the office (8970 Route 108, Suite A-1, Columbia, MD 21045) and placed in the mailbox or emailed to info@somdhc.org and must be received by March 29th. For further information and application, click [here](#).

Strong Minds Bingo

Your mental and emotional health is a critical aspect of overall health and well-being, and it is something that affects all of us. This **Strong Minds Challenge** features different mindfulness practices that can improve your well-being. Topics include sleep, diet, exercise, journaling, singing, and many more. These practices are designed to be easily incorporated into daily life and to help individuals practice self-care in our everyday lifestyles.

This will be a self-led challenge, with helpful hints and tricks along the way. Each participant will create their own Strong Minds Bingo board to try a new Strong Minds strategy every day.

This challenge will run from February 1st through February 28th, 2025. Follow [THIS LINK](#) to print a copy of your BINGO Board

If you would like to participate in this challenge, follow the registration link [LINKED HERE](#)



24th Annual Inspiration Walk

It's hard to think about the nice weather of spring as we are having such a cold winter, but we are already planning our 24th annual Inspiration Walk which will take place on April 26th at the Oakland Mills Meeting House. For 24 years, the Inspiration Walk has been an opportunity to bring together our families, athletes, coaches and volunteers in a festive environment to raise critical funds needed to support our over 950

athletes in 24 sports programs. We hope that families will show their appreciation for these programs, which are provided free of charge, by donating and raising funds for this event. We need all families to participate in fundraising at some level in order for Special Olympics Howard County to meet our financial goals

You can start to raise funds for this year's event by starting a fundraising page [here](#).

Sandy Dukes Accepts 5x5 Traditional Basketball Coordinator

As noted in last month's newsletter, Jim and Theresa Bourdon will be stepping down as 5x5 Traditional Basketball Coordinators after over **20**



Discounted MinuteClinic Physicals/Medical Updates

Special Olympics has continued their nation-wide partnership with MinuteClinic! Click [here](#) for the updated voucher for discounted medicals at all MinuteClinics for Special Olympics participation! Please make sure you bring Special Olympics medical forms with you as they may not have them there.



OUR 2024 OVER THE EDGE SPONSORS

Many thank to our corporate sponsors who are critical in helping us put on this exciting event!

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Environmental Systems Associates
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Rodgers Consulting
Shiple and Horne

years of involvement at the end of this season! We are incredibly grateful for their commitment to our basketball program and our organization.

Sandy Dukes, mother of athlete Matthew, agreed to take on the role of Coordinator, and we asked Sandy why she stepped up.

"Our family's Special Olympics journey started a few years back when my son, Matthew, currently age 22, signed up for soccer while in middle school. It's been amazing to watch him grow, branching out to bowling, basketball, and golf! Basketball's his absolute favorite though – it's really changed his life.

When Jim and Theresa decided to retire as coordinators, I felt I should step up and give back. Special Olympics has meant so much to Matthew, and volunteering felt like the perfect way to say thanks for all the incredible opportunities they've given him and our family."

Thank you, Sandy. As an all-volunteer organization, we couldn't do what we do without individuals such as you who step up into these critical positions.

Pickleball Update

SOMD is excited with the progress that has been made with the transition of Pickleball to a state-level sport for SOMD. A special thank you to the members of the Ad Hoc Pickleball Advisory group who have been instrumental in preparations (Sue Anzalone, Mike Malinoski, Bobbie Ridley and our very own Bob Sans who has made it his mission to move this to a state-level sport).

Based on the input from this advisory group, and using the input from the Area Survey conducted in Fall 2024, some key decisions that we can share at this time:

- We will have a briefing session for interested coaches and Area leaders on Monday, February 17 at 6:00-7:30pm on [Zoom](#)
- Pickleball will be considered a "spring season" sport
- Pickleball competitions will follow the Special Olympics rules for Pickleball with events being offered in Individual skills, singles, doubles and Unified Doubles at 5 different levels (skills, beginner, advanced beginner, intermediate and advanced)
- This year, SOMD will host a state Pickleball Championship as a single-sport, standalone event in late -June/early-July timeframe.
- After the 2025's championship, it will be decided whether to integrate pickleball into Summer Games or keep it as a standalone event.
- SOMD is working on scheduling coaches training sessions this spring.

Thank you Bob Sans, for all your efforts to make this happen!!

Coming Spring and Summer 2025: iCan Swim Camp!

iCan Swim is a Rec & Parks program designed to teach children with disabilities to swim independently and achieve their aquatic goals as well as learn valuable water safety skills during the week-long program. iCan Swim is a program coordinated and managed by the Therapeutic Recreation Office in partnership with iCan Shine, Inc.

3-12 yrs | Classes: 5

RP4219 | Cedar Lane School | Monday-Friday | \$175

STREET FESTIVAL SPONSORS

Apple Ford
Cushman and Wakefield
Geotechnology Associates

Any business/corporation that is interested in being a **2025 Over the Edge Sponsor** should contact the office at 410-740-0500 for sponsorship details. We hope those businesses above will continue as a sponsor this year and that some new businesses will consider joining this exciting event!

What are ABLE Accounts?

ABLE Accounts are a way to help individuals with disabilities save money and pay for qualified disability-related expenses (including living expenses, education, housing, transportation, assistive technology and much more) without jeopardizing state or federal means-tested benefits such as SSI or Medicaid. Click [here](#) for more information.

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. Since the beginning of this program, we have received **\$19,981.00** in donations! If you have a car you would like to donate, please use this [link](#)

Camps are offered the weeks of: April 14-18, 2025, June 23-27, 2025, July 7-11, 2025

Our Special Olympics swim program requires athletes to be able to swim two lengths of the pool, so this is a great intro to swimming class to help prepare for Special Olympics swimming.

Coaching Special Olympics Athletes

SOMD is pleased to host a “live” virtual session of Coaching Special Olympics Athletes (CSOA), **the course which ALL coaches are required to complete at least once in order to earn/maintain Special Olympics Coach Sport Certification.** This interactive session will be held on Tuesday, March 4 from 6:30 – 9:00 pm via Zoom and will be limited to 20 registrants.

Coaches may register for this course using this [link](#) (***must register no later than Friday, February 28***).

Coaches who are unable to attend this session may always complete the individual online version of the CSOA course – licenses can be obtained by emailing coaches@somd.org. Additional details are available on the [SOMD Coach Resource Page's Coach Education and Development Section](#)
Note: Due to limited numbers of available licenses, this individual online option is currently limited to coaches/volunteers who have not already completed CSOA.

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, 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.