Special Olympics Howard County
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Contact SOHO Today

October 2026 Newsletter - Issue #6

Winter Sports Registration to Open on October 26

Registration for the winter season of sports includes alpine skiing, basketball (five levels based on coaches' skills assessment), winter bowling, CrossFit, snowshoeing, Spirit Fitness, Swimming and the Young Athletes Program. Register from our **website** beginning October 26.
NOTES:

- Swimming athletes will begin the practice season in January and weekly practices will continue up until Summer Games in June. All athletes interested in participating and competing in swimming must register with the winter season.·
- Winter bowling priority is given to those who did not bowl in the fall and to children of volunteers.
- To allow more athletes to participate and to reduce the length of wait lists, athletes may register for a maximum of 3 sports.
- Athletes who register for a sport that is at capacity will automatically be wait listed and will be notified if a spot becomes available.
- We will try to maximize participation for as many athletes as possible. This means that if you register for three sports, you may get bumped from one, in order to allow athletes that are only on waiting lists to also participate.
- **As always, participation is guaranteed for families that step up to coordinate or coach a sport.**

What a great day for the Inspiration Walk!

Office Hours

Monday/Friday 8:30 - 1:30
Tuesday 1:30 - 6:30

The 2026 Howard County Inspiration Walk was held on Saturday, September 12. The new location at Color Burst Park was a great venue for our event and provided an opportunity for athletes to participate in a fun day of music, prizes and celebration.

There was a lot to celebrate. 2026 marked the 25th anniversary of the Inspiration Walk and SOHO Director Bob Baker recognized the founding members of the walk who have provided their support from the very beginning (pictured L-R above, Cole Schnorf, Adam and Jason Kauffman, representing their mom, Marilyn Miceli, Kevin Colabucci, Jen Gallagher, Allan Waschak, Beth Greenberg, George Guthrie, and Bob Baker. Founding members not in attendance were Diane Mikulis, Joe Wagner, Barbara Evans & Clyde Wrathall. Special guests County Executive Calvin Ball and Special Olympics Maryland President Jim Schmutz spoke to encourage and inspire our athletes. Christine Towne did a wonderful job as our athlete emcee. Christiana Rigby from the Howard County Council presented SOHO with an Honorary Resolution to recognize the 25th anniversary of the walk and the achievements of the athletes.

The Oriole Bird, Andy, the Texas Roadhouse mascot, and dancing and music provided by DJ Steve Towne kept us all entertained. Participants enjoyed the hospitality and treats from Dunkin Donuts, Eggspectations and Texas Roadhouse. Prizes included a bag of Oriole gear, SOHO and Outback merch, gift certificates to our online merchandise store, a basket of honey from a local apiarist and the grand prize of $250 worth of gift cards to local restuarants. Additionally, 47 attendees won raffles for gift cards to local restaurants including Maggiano's, Medium Rare, Eggspectation, Outback and Ranazul.

Click here to check out all the photos from the day.

Many thanks to all of our corporate sponsors. **Our $15K presenting sponsor, Howard Hughes Communities, $10K sponsors Allan Homes, ARCO and Lisa Higgins-Hussman Foundation, and our other sponsors: Bohler, Charm City Run, Columbia Association, Cushman & Wakefield, Freedom Technology Solutions Group, FTK Group, Hillmuth Autocare, Inner Arbor Trust, J.E. Schenk & Associates, Manekin, Rodgers Consulting, Shipley & Horn, Tenable and The Wendy Slaughter Team.**

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		

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 Thursday, October 15 and Tuesday, November 17, both from 7-8pm at our SOHO office.

WE HAVE A CRITICAL NEED FOR BASKETBALL 3V3PD FOR THE WINTER SESSION AND CYCLING FOR NEXT FALL. SEE ARTICLE TO THE LEFT.

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

Have you donated yet?

There's still time and we are short of our $175K Inspiration Walk goal by $25K! Are you the parent of a Special Olympics athlete? **Did you know that providing Special Olympics sports for your athlete costs ~$287 per athlete per season?** While we don't charge registration fees, we as volunteers need to raise nearly $300K per year to operate our 25 sports programs. Just think 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 so that Special Olympics can continue to provide sports opportunities for your athlete.

A huge thank you to the 26 families that raised $1000 or more. This small group accounted for over 50% of all family donations!

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 competitions, uniforms, equipment, facilities, office manager salary and office expenses. You can donate and fundraise by **CLICKING HERE** or by sending a check to our office (SOHO, 8970 Route 108 Suite A1, Columbia, MD 21045).

We need your help and we appreciate your support!

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** .

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, when needed (mostly ice packs and Band-Aids!) 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, activities and other relevant information.

Golf Season Wrap Up

LEVEL 1 (provided by Susan Sarnecki)

SOHC golf level 1 had a great season with 28 athletes participating!! Our athletes had good attendance at practices and we had 16 athletes able to participate in at least 1 qualifier.
Our season was definitely affected by summer weather with heat and rain cancelling some of our practices/qualifiers, but that did not stop the enthusiasm of our athletes!! A big thank you to our many coaches and volunteers, as well as the parents and caregivers, for making this another wonderful Golf Skills season!!! See you next summer. *Special thanks to Susan Sarnecki, our skills coordinator, our head coach, Bob Muller and all the volunteers who helped this season.*

LEVELS 2-5 (provided by Christine Civick)

Golf 2-5 had a great season! While the weather didn't always cooperate with us, we were able to hold the majority of our practices. Our athletes worked hard and grew in both skills and stamina. 23 of our teams competed at local qualifiers around the state. All told, we competed in a total of 61 qualifiers between the 23 teams! Two teams took the crown for most qualifiers attended - both Colby and Brent Kennedy and Richard and Robert Allen attended 6 qualifiers over the course of the season! We're super bummed that our State Games was cancelled due to the Nor'easter that hit us, but we're looking ahead to next season! *Special thanks to Christine Civick, our level 2-5 coordinator, our head coach Isaac Sarnecki, and all the partners and caddies who made this season possible.*

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.

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

URGENT ALERT:
2026 May be the Last Year for Cycling and Basketball 3v3PD

After 12 years of volunteer service, Gigi Sheltraw has stepped down as coordinator and Colleen Konstanzer as Head Coach for basketball 3v3 Player Development (PD). The succuss of the 3v3PD group is in large part due to their dedication to the athletes. A new coordinator and head coach is needed to continue that success.

Cheryl and Zach Decker have led the cycling group as coordinators and head coach Bill Parlock for over 25 years! It's hard to imagine having a cycling program without them, but we're sure there is someone out there who can fill the void.

Don't let these athletes down! They want to continue to play and compete. **However, if no one steps up to be the new coordinators and coach, we will not have cycling and basketball 3v3PD in 2027.**

The coordinator handles all communications with families and volunteers, ensures that everyone is registered properly, and basically handle the administrative tasks needed to keep things running smoothly. Head coaches run the practice drills and games.

Who can qualify to be a coordinator? **YOU!** SOHO provides the training and support. The main qualification is to have good organization skills. It's also helpful to have two coordinators to share the role. If you would like to ensure the future success of cycling and basketball 3v3PD, send an email to info@somdhc.org to express interest in being a coordinator or coach.

SOHO Merchandise Store

Did you know that we have an online merchandise store? It is full of SOHO merch such as hats, shirts, bags, water bottles. Need a new coat for the upcoming winter season? Check out the collection of coats and hats to keep you warm. **Click here** to see all the merchandise available. If there's something you'd like to see in the store, let us know by sending an email to info@somdhc.org and we'll see if we can get it.