

# MEDIA PACKET

I N S P I R E  
G R E A T N E S S <sup>™</sup>



*Special Olympics*  
*Alaska*

## ALASKA DELEGATION

to the

2005 Special Olympics World Winter Games

February 26 - March 5, 2005

Nagano • Japan

# INTRODUCTION

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**Special Olympics**  
*Alaska*

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Athletes, Coaches, Families, Volunteers and Media Representatives:

Special Olympics Alaska (SOAK) is proud of the 10 Alaskans selected to participate in the 2005 Special Olympics World Winter Games (SOWWG). From our own experience as host of the 2001 SOWWG, we know the games will be a true celebration of athletic achievement, packed with moments of triumph, joy and inspiration.

Not long ago people with intellectual disabilities were thought to lack the ability to train, much less compete, in sports. Today, the Special Olympics global movement clearly demonstrates that not only do athletes with intellectual disabilities excel in sports, they also inspire us all in a powerful way. Fittingly, the Special Olympics slogan is *Inspire Greatness*.

To our athletes, we salute each of you. Every run, routine and game began with a small step. Your dreams, along with a lot of hard work and training, led you to the Special Olympics World Winter Games. Keep training, keep setting new goals and keep learning new skills. We will be here to cheer you on as you succeed both on and off the playing field.

Families, your support and encouragement have taken your athletes to this exciting event. Thanks to you, Special Olympics athletes can experience the joy of sports training and the thrill of competition. When we cheer for the athletes, we are cheering for you as well.

Coaches and volunteers, we salute you. Since 1968, hundreds of thousands of you have volunteered time and talent to train athletes, organize competition, provide transportation or congratulate an athlete. Your efforts certainly “inspire greatness.”

Media representatives, please do not hesitate to ask the SO-AK staff to assist you with feature ideas, athlete interviews, program information and other newsworthy opportunities. Your coverage of SO-AK athletes and coaches, and the 2005 World Winter Games is key to enhancing public awareness of Special Olympics. Through your words and photos, more Alaskans will come to understand that a year-round, statewide Special Olympics program exists, and that it is here to serve literally thousands of Alaskans.



Special Olympics  
Alaska

# ABOUT SO-AK

## ORGANIZATION

### *Part of a Global Movement*

Special Olympics Alaska, Inc. (SO-AK) is an accredited program of Special Olympics Inc. (SOI), a global organization providing sports training and competition to over one million people with intellectual disabilities in 150 countries. The state office of Special Olympics Alaska is charged with raising funds, organizing state competitions, and providing guidance and support to local area programs.

There are about 20 community programs in Alaska that provide training at the local level. These programs are organized in communities as large as Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, Ketchikan, Kenai Peninsula, Kodiak and the Mat-Su Valley, to rural Alaskan towns as small and remote as Barrow and Nome. These grassroots programs are the heart of Special Olympics Alaska. They are the point of entry for athletes and families, and provide the best forum for community support, including a critical volunteer force.

## MISSION

### *Inspiring Greatness*

**Mission:** To provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for people eight years of age and older with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

**Official Goal:** To help bring all persons with intellectual or developmental disabilities into the larger society under conditions whereby they are accepted, respected and given a chance to become more productive citizens.

**Philosophy:** Through training, Special Olympics athletes not only acquire specific sports skills to prepare for competition, they also gain an opportunity for even greater participation in family, school and community life.

## HISTORY

### *A Foundation of Soul*

Soon after President John F. Kennedy took office in 1961, his sister Eunice Kennedy Shriver launched a crusade to change the way the world treated — or ignored — intellectual disabilities. The re-education program gained credence as the Kennedys disclosed that one of their own, Rosemary Kennedy, had intellectual disabilities.

Throughout the 1960s, Eunice Shriver's commitment saw landmark legislation dealing with intellectual disabilities and disability rights. She was instrumental in bringing intellectual disabilities out of the darkness and into the light of public acceptance.

The genesis of Special Olympics was a summer day camp that Sargent and Eunice Shriver started in the backyard of their Maryland home. In July 1968, the world witnessed the First International Special Olympics Games at Soldier Field in Chicago. In December of that year, the Joseph P. Kennedy Foundation incorporated Special Olympics. Since then, Special Olympics has grown to become the largest program of its kind.

Special Olympics in Alaska traces its beginnings to 1969. Erica Ahrens' initial interest blossomed into the first state games in Fairbanks in 1969. Another key player was Chuck Melick who served as the first games director in Alaska.

## VOLUNTEERS

### *The Heartbeat*

Volunteer participation make quality, comprehensive training and competition possible. Volunteer coaches are specifically trained to teach sports skills, as well as prepare athletes to overcome barriers that have stood between them and skills for many years ... even a lifetime. Other volunteers perform critical functions ... from running a competitive event to raising funds; from officiating a game to coordinating families; and from administrative support to public relations. Contact the state office for more information.

*Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.*

— Special Olympics Oath

## PROGRAMS

### *Lifting Spirits through Sports*

Special Olympics programs are patterned after the Olympic Games. In Alaska, over 1,000 athletes and thousands of volunteers are involved in Special Olympics. During the year, athletes come together in state competition to participate in 16 official sports:

- **Winter Games** in March — Alpine Skiing, Figure Skating, Floor Hockey, Cross-country Skiing, Snow Boarding, Snowshoeing and Speed Skating
- **Summer Games** in June — Athletics (Track & Field), Aquatics (Swimming & Diving), Basketball, Gymnastics and Powerlifting
- **Fall Games** in September — Bocce, Golf and Equestrian
- **Bowling Tournament** in November
- **Unified Sports™** throughout the year. Unified Sports™ brings together Special Olympics athletes and people without intellectual disabilities to train and compete as teammates. In Alaska, Unified Sports™ training and competition is offered in basketball, bocce, bowling, golf, swimming and running relays.

Through statewide competition, athletes can qualify to compete in Special Olympics World Summer and Winter Games, which alternate every other year in locations around the globe. Special Olympics Alaska was the host program for the 2001 Special Olympics World Winter Games.

The SO-AK School Program provides school-based sports training and competitive opportunities to Alaska youth through partnership with Alaskan schools. Students grades K-12 with and without intellectual disabilities participate in sports, social, and recreational activities together working toward building lifelong skills through inclusive activities.

## SPONSORS

### *The Lifeline*

Sponsorships comprise a significant part of SO-AK's operating budget. SO-AK has developed sponsorship levels that range from sponsoring state games year-round, to contributing in-kind products and services in support of competition. Sponsorship can be very beneficial to corporate partners, given SO-AK's tremendous public image and recognition.

## ELIGIBILITY

### *Our Courageous Athletes*

1. **Agree to Abide by the Rules.** To be eligible for participation in Special Olympics, a competitor must agree to observe and abide by the Official Special Olympics Rules.
2. **No Discrimination.** No person shall — on the grounds of sex, race, religion, color or national origin — be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity of Special Olympics.
3. **Age Requirements.** Persons are eligible for Special Olympics, provided that they are 8 years of age or older. An accredited program may allow children that are 6 or 7 years old to train; however, they may not compete. There is no maximum age limit.
4. **Identify as having intellectual disabilities.** A person is considered to have intellectual disabilities if:
  - An agency or professional has identified the person as having an intellectual disability; or
  - The person has a cognitive delay as determined by standard measures, such as IQ testing or other measures that are generally accepted within the professional community; or
  - The person has a closely related development disability, i.e. functional limitations in both general learning and adaptive skills. Persons with functional limitations based solely on physical, behavioral, emotional, sensory or specific disabilities are not eligible.

## CONTACT US

The Special Olympics Alaska, Inc. state office can be contacted by:

- **Write** — 3200 Mountain View Drive  
Anchorage, Alaska 99501
- **Phone** — 1-888-499-7625 (in state)  
or (907) 222-7625
- **Fax** — (907) 222-6200
- **Email** — [info@specialolympicsalaska.org](mailto:info@specialolympicsalaska.org)
- **Web Site** — [www.SpecialOlympicsAlaska.org](http://www.SpecialOlympicsAlaska.org)

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**Special Olympics**  
*Alaska*

# SO-AK BOARD

## EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

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**Secretary** — **Michael Koropp**, orthodontist  
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## DIRECTORS

**John "Jack" Bergeron Jr.**, Alaska Manager, Total E&P USA, Inc.  
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**Jeff Evans**, Vice President, Tesoro Petroleum  
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**Craig Gales**, VP Operations & Business Development, Alaska Waste Transfer  
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**Ed Lamb**, CEO, Alaska Regional Hospital  
**Mary Jane Michael**, Director, Economic and Community Development, Municipality of Anchorage  
**Lucy Odden**, Special Olympics Alaska athlete  
**Nancy Peterson**, Assistant City Manager, City of Valdez  
**Michael Porcaro**, Owner, Porcaro Communications  
**Kenneth Privratsky**, VP and General Manager, Horizon Lines  
**Mark Rowley**, Commercial Real Estate Broker, Pacific Towers Properties  
**Ben Stevens**, Senate President, Alaska State Legislature  
**John Walsh**, Lobbyist  
**Robert Warthen**, Banking, KeyBank N.A.  
**Lori Wing**, Senior Vice President, Brady & Company  
**Janel Wright**, Attorney, Disability Law Center of Alaska

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## BOARD OF GOVERNORS

**Representative Ethan Berkowitz**, Alaska State Legislature  
**Ronald Duncan**, President, CEO and Co-founder, GCI  
**William Hensley**, Director of Washington DC Government Affairs, Alyeska Pipeline Service Co.  
**Stephen McAlpine**, Attorney  
**Michael O'Connor**, President, Peak Oilfield Service Company  
**Arliiss Sturgulewski**, Former State Legislator  
**Senator Gary Wilken**, Alaska State Legislature  
**Congressman Don Young**, U.S. House of Representatives

LEADERSHIP



# FACT SHEET

## 2005 Special Olympics World Winter Games and Special Olympics Team USA

### TEAM USA

- What:** 2005 Special Olympics World Winter Games
- Who:** Special Olympics Team USA, comprised of 200 athletes and 50 coaches representing all 50 states and the District of Columbia, will join more than 1,900 athletes, 650 coaches, 28,000 family members and 10,000 volunteers from 86 nations around the world
- When:** February 26 - March 65, 2005
- Where:** Nagano, Japan

### SPORTS

Sports offered at the 2005 World Winter Games:

- Alpine Skiing
- Cross Country Skiing
- Figure Skating
- Floor Hockey
- Snowboarding
- Snowshoeing
- Speed Skating

### SIGNIFICANCE

*How Significant are the 2005 Special Olympics World Winter Games?*

The 8th Special Olympics World Winter Games will be the largest international sporting event to occur in 2005. It will be comparable to the 1998 Olympic Winter Games in terms of the number of participating countries and athletes.

### BACKGROUND

Special Olympics is an international program which provides year-round sports training and athletic competition for children and adults with developmental disabilities in 25 Olympic-type sports in over 150 countries around the world. Founded in 1968 by Eunice Kennedy Shriver, Special Olympics inspires greatness in over one million athletes who benefit from their participation with this worldwide movement.

### SPONSORS

Since participation in Special Olympics is offered at no cost to the athletes involved, Special Olympics is pleased to announce that Columbia Sportswear and Sage Hospitality are sponsors of Team USA.

### INFO ONLINE

- For information regarding the 2005 World Winter Games visit: [www.2005sowwg.com](http://www.2005sowwg.com) and for details specific to Team USA, visit [www.specialolympicsteamusa.org](http://www.specialolympicsteamusa.org)
- For information regarding Special Olympics, Inc, visit: [www.specialolympics.org](http://www.specialolympics.org)

### TEAM USA INFO

- Team USA Sports Information Representative  
Paige Ludwig, (614) 239-7050  
email: [palsooh@aol.com](mailto:palsooh@aol.com)
- Team USA Communications Director  
Kelly Kloepping, (614) 239-7050  
email: [palsooh@aol.com](mailto:palsooh@aol.com)

TEAM USA

INSPIRE  
GREATNESSTM**Special Olympics**  
Alaska

# ALASKA SENDS 8 ATHLETES

## *Special Olympics Alaska sends delegation of 10 to 2005 Special Olympics World Games*

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — Eight Special Olympics Alaska (SO-AK) athletes and two coaches head for Nagano, Japan, on February 20 to participate in the 2005 Special Olympics World Winter Games (SOWWG).

The Alaska Delegation, part of Team USA, will join nearly 1,900 athletes from more than 80 countries who are expected to participate in the Games, which will take place February 26 - March 5 at many of the venues used for the 1998 Olympic Winter Games, in Nagano, Japan. In organizing the eighth such event in the 36-year history of Special Olympics, Nagano becomes the first host of the Olympic, Paralympic and Special Olympics Games, as well as the first site in Asia to host any Special Olympics World Games, summer or winter.

In the true spirit of the "Let's Celebrate Together" theme, the World Games will bring together celebrities, heads of state, and leaders in the fields of education, health care, business and sports all in support of Special Olympics. In addition to competition in seven sports, the World Games also will feature a series of events aimed at transforming communities and the lives of the 170 million people worldwide with intellectual disabilities by promoting understanding, acceptance and inclusion.

Traveling from all corners of the world, the athletes will be joined by 650 coaches and more than 10,000 volunteers, families and friends as they compete and celebrate the spirit of sportsmanship. Comparable to the 1998 Olympic Winter Games in terms of the number of participating countries and athletes, the 2005 Special Olympics World Games will be three times the size of the Nagano Paralympic Games.

-end-



The Alaska Delegation includes:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Competition Sport</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Hometown</b>
Richard Champion	Cross Country Skiing	37	Seward
Stephanie Palinski	Alpine Skiing	25	Anchorage
Alyssa Tucker	Figure Skating	14	Anchorage
Shannon Sullivan	Snowboarding	18	Anchorage
Amy Murrills	Snowboarding	32	Fairbanks
Joseph Pratt	Snowboarding	22	Mat-Su Valley
Desire Kelso	Snowshoeing	28	Eagle River
Amy Lee Stevens	Speed Skating	22	Fairbanks
Elke Gustafson	Coach - Alpine Skiing		Anchorage
Dean Davidson	Coach - Speed Skating		Eagle River

"Just as our Japanese hosts welcomed the world to Nagano in 1998, they graciously now offer their hospitality to the worldwide Special Olympics movement," said Special Olympics Chairman and CEO Timothy Shriver. "Their commitment to inspiring people in Japan and throughout the world to open their minds and accept people with intellectual disabilities serves as a shining example of how to change not only attitudes, but also the world."

For more information about the Games, visit [www.2005sowwg.com](http://www.2005sowwg.com). For more information specific to Team USA, visit [www.specialolympicsteamusa.org](http://www.specialolympicsteamusa.org).

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## TORCH RUN FINAL LEG

### *One Alaskan to participate in Law Enforcement Torch Run's Final Leg for 2005 World Winter Games*

FAIRBANKS, Alaska — Fairbanks Law Enforcement Officer Terry Vrabec has been selected to deliver the "Flame of Hope" to the 2005 Special Olympics World Winter Games (SOWWG) in Nagano, Japan. Chief Vrabec will be one of 110 runners from 19 countries participating in the final leg of the Law Enforcement Torch Run® for Special Olympics. He will carry the torch through Japan leading up to the Games, which begin on 26 February..

"Terry Vrabec is a true Guardian of the Flame who exemplifies the support that thousands of law enforcement officers around the world give to the Special Olympics movement," said Timothy Shriver, Chairman and CEO of Special Olympics. "This International Final Leg Torch Run will help light the way for the 2005 Special Olympics World Winter Games."

The Law Enforcement Torch Run is the largest grass-roots fundraiser for Special Olympics programs in the world. Every two years, law enforcement officers and athletes representing their state's or nation's Torch Run program are given the distinction of making the Final Leg team that carries the Special Olympics "Flame of Hope" to the World Games. This year, two Final Leg teams will carry the torch more than 2,000 kilometers to 66 communities before completing the journey to the Games Opening Ceremonies. During the ceremony, the cauldron will be lit and the Games will be declared open.

Chief Vrabec earned the prestigious Final Leg position in recognition of his countless hours of time and energy dedicated to the Law Enforcement Torch Run effort in Alaska. He has been involved with the state effort since 1998, and has chaired the run in 2004 and again this year (The 2005 Alaska Law Enforcement Torch Run will be held in 17 communities on May 21).

After graduating from the University of Alaska with a criminal justice degree, Vrabec worked as a police officer in the small Alaskan community of Soldotna. He then transferred to a crime prevention unit in the Chicago area and eventually came back to the University of Alaska in 1991 to help the university develop a police department. He was promoted to Chief in 1997. Chief Vrabec lives in Fairbanks with his wife Kim and two children, Brandi and Tommy.

###

# PARTICIPATING ALASKA ATHLETES



**Athlete: Richard Champion**

Community: Seward  
 Age: 37  
 World Games Sport: Cross-Country Skiing  
 Other SO-AK Sports: Athletics and snowshoeing  
 Achievements: Recognized by the Alaska Sealife Center for contributing over 2,000 hours of volunteer work.

**Other Notes:** The community of Seward and the Champion family are very proud of Richard's accomplishments and his selection to Team USA. Champion has made many friends through Special Olympics and he serves as a role model to the younger Special Olympics athletes in his state. In his spare time, Seward attends church where he serves as an usher and he enjoys bowling.



**Athlete: Desire Kelso**

Community: Eagle River  
 Age: 28  
 World Games Sport: Snowshoeing  
 Other SO-AK Sports: Athletics, Basketball, Bowling, Golf and Softball  
 Other Notes:

Special Olympics has allowed Desire Kelso gain skills to be independent. She currently lives on her own with her cat, Gabby. Kelso is looking forward to going to another county, meeting other people and seeing different things when she attends the World Games.



**Athlete: Amy Murrills**

Community: Fairbanks  
 Age: 32  
 World Games Sport: Snowboarding  
 Other SO-AK Sports: Aquatics, Powerlifting and Speed Skating  
 Achievements: Attended the 1995, 1999, 2001 and 2003 Special Olympics World Games

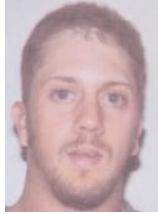
**Other Notes:** A seasoned World Games athlete, Amy Murrills is looking forward to her trip to Japan to meet people from different countries. Her hobbies include collecting toy cars, Winnie the Pooh items and key chains



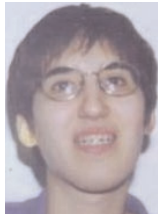
**Athlete: Stephanie Palinski**

Community: Anchorage  
 Age: 25  
 World Games Sport: Alpine Skiing  
 Other SO-AK Sports: Bowling  
 Other Notes:

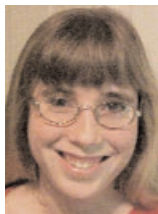
Stephanie Palinski has worked as a Baker's Helper for Carrs since 2000. She skied while in high school and has been able to continue skiing through Special Olympics Alaska. Palinski loves playing bingo with her friends and she also rings bells with the notable Camai Ringers.



**Athlete: Joseph Pratt**  
 Community: Wasilla  
 Age: 22  
 World Games Sport: Snowboarding  
 Other SO-AK Sports: Basketball and Golf  
 Other Notes: Joseph Pratt enjoys action movies and going fishing.

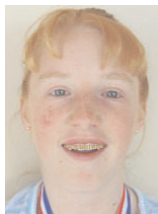


**Athlete: Amy Stevens**  
 Community: Fairbanks  
 Age: 22  
 World Games Sport: Speed Skating  
 Other SO-AK Sports: Athletics and Equestrian  
 Other Notes: Amy Stevens is employed as a sales associate for Wal-Mart. She attributes Special Olympics for making her stronger both physically and mentally. As this is her first World Games experience, she is looking forward to seeing a new culture and competing against athletes from different countries. Stevens enjoys horseback riding, music, reading, talking on the phone and the computer.



**Athlete: Shannon Sullivan**  
 Community: Anchorage  
 Age: 18  
 World Games Sport: Snowboarding  
 Other SO-AK Sports: Gymnastics  
 Achievements: Boys & Girls Club Athlete of the Month  
 Member of High School Gymnastics Team

Other Notes: Shannon Sullivan began snowboarding at the age of fourteen. Sullivan also enjoys horseback riding, dancing and traveling



**Athlete: Alyssa Tucker**  
 Community: Anchorage  
 Age: 14  
 World Games Sport: Figure Skating  
 Other SO-AK Sports: Alpine Skiing, Aquatics (Swimming & Diving), athletics (Track & Field), Bowling and Snowboarding  
 Achievements: Competes in ISI and USFA Skating Competitions  
 Participated on Middle School Track Team

Other Notes: Alyssa Tucker is a well rounded Special Olympics athlete who competes in both winter and summer sports. She is eager to compete in the 2005 World Games to represent the U.S.A. Tucker was a spectator for the 2001 World Games which were held in her hometown of Anchorage, Alaska. Tucker says, "I was able to watch the 2001 World Games. Now I get to compete in them."



**Coach: Dean Davidson**  
 Community: Eagle River  
 World Games Sport: Speed Skating  
 Other SO-AK Sports: Cross-county Skiing  
 Other Notes: Dean Davidson has been coaching Special Olympics athletes for ten years. He feels one of his greatest accomplishments as a coach is teaching the speed skaters how to do crossovers.



**Coach: Elke Gustafson**  
 Community: Anchorage  
 World Games Sport: Alpine Skiing  
 Other Notes: Elke Gustafson likes to ski and do gardening. She is very passionate about her rose bushes. Elke takes pride in her athlete's success as well as her commitment to Special Olympics.