



Waunakee Rotary Club

Sept. 4, 2008
Vol. 42 No. 7

The oath of Wisconsin Special Olympics, "Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt," could serve as a mantra for all of us.

In fact, John Weichelt, regional director of Wisconsin Special Olympics, said the world might be a better place if we all followed that oath.

John and a Special Olympic athlete, Jill Mitchell, spoke to the Waunakee Rotary Club at its Aug. 28 meeting.

John said there are 200 Special Olympic teams throughout the state. Special Olympics offers sports competition in its truest sense – the athletes are there not to win, but to try.

Special Olympics was created in 1963 as a venue for athletes with cognitive disabilities to compete. Athletes can begin competing at age 8 and continue for the rest of their lives, he said. It is the largest program of athletic training for those with cognitive disabilities.

There are 70 different competitions in 18 different sports with national and world games. Special Olympics world games were last held in Shanghai, China in 2007.

In Waunakee, 31 Special Olympics athletes compete. Special Olympics hosts local, then regional and district events, and athletes compete in divisions according to ability level. Regional swimming is now hosted at the Waunakee school district Aquatic Center, and this past spring, an Olympic athlete made an appearance at the event, John said.

Special Olympics has 34 staff members and 14,000 volunteers

who help deliver water to the athletes, provide meals, help with scoring and present medals.

There are five state games. The next national game is in 2010 in Nebraska.

World games are held every two years, and the next one in 2009 will be the winter games in Idaho.

Special Olympics not only offers those with cognitive disabilities the chance to compete, but to travel and see the world as well, John said.

Jill said she competes in volleyball, softball, speed skating and bowling, and plays basketball for fun. She has been competing in Special Olympics since she was 8; she's 30 now, she said.

She's traveled to both Japan and Alaska and has won medals.

John said Special Olympics changes lives, but it's not just about sports. An Athletic Leadership Program allows athletes to speak to groups, as Jill did at Rotary.

And the Healthy Athletes program provides free health screenings, including dental, vision and physical exams.

Special Olympics relies on contributions from corporations and individuals. Some of the "wacky" fund-raisers include the Polar Plunge in Madison, John said.

Other news:

- The club received the first installment of its profits from Waunafest in the amount of \$2,500.

- A sign-up sheet for volunteers will be passed around next week. Club members are also invited to go to the Wauktoberfest planning

OFFICERS

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Calendar of Events:

- Sept. 4, fall golf outing.
- Oct. 4-5, Wauktoberfest

meeting at 4 p.m. Sept. 3 at Capital Brewery.

- The golf outing at Northern Bay is Sept. 4. Golfers can leave directly from the Rotary meeting, which will likely be abbreviated.

Guests: Paul Insolera, guest of Greg Garton.

Birthdays: Sept. 5, Gordy Meicher; Sept. 6, Tom Reis; Sept. 10, Kevin Kearney.

Anniversaries: Sept. 8, Ron and Michelle Ballweg; Sept. 9, Linda and Don Olson.

Prayers: Sept. 4, Pat Durden; Susan Vergeront.

Programs: Sept. 4, Club Assembly.

Greeters: Sept. 4, Kevin Kearney and David Kennedy; Sept. 11, Neil King and Ed Kruchten; Sept. 18; Dave Kruchten and Neil Kruschek; Sept. 25, Craig Larson and Tom Laufenberg.

Make up meetings online

It's easy to make up a meeting on the Internet. The site is www.rotaryclubone.org. Print out the form and give it to Phil Willems, the club secretary.