

THE STORIES



TEAM TENNESSEE

During the past week many of the athletes' stories and experiences have been shared. The Global Youth Summit participants attended the Parents Forum at Dublin Castle today to get a different view point of Special Olympics and the effect it has had on athletes.

Cherl Ward's daughter, Stefanie, is competing at the 2003 World Games in women's powerlifting. Mrs. Ward shared her views of Special Olympics with the Global Youth Summit.

"Stefanie started in Special Olympics when it became apparent that she could no longer keep up with the neighborhood children. Special Olympics gave her a place to be competitive and feel good about herself. It's great to see kids expand and feel good about being a part of something instead of sitting alone at home.

"Our community is very big with Special Olympics. There are over 800 local kids involved. Stefanie attends an integrated school in Virginia Beach. She is treated well there. If she ever has problems there is always someone there to take up for her.

The Global Youth Summit asked Mrs. Ward about how Special Olympics can better spread its message and let others know more about it.

"You have to push parents to get involved. Many times they are unaware of the many different options available to them when it comes to Special Olympics. School is one place to promote and get people involved. Many students see their friends get involved and want to be a part of Special Olympics. Parents could help spread the word by talking to other parents through support groups and other agencies. Parents need to look into the future and see how Special Olympics affects their child. Special Olympics not only provides a way for individuals to feel good about themselves and compete with others, but it teaches them the benefits of physical activity. As individuals with mental disabilities get older this will become more and more important."

Stefanie not only participates in women's powerlifting, but also in volleyball, basketball and tennis. While at the World Games she has won silver, bronze and gold medals in powerlifting.

TEAM TAIWAN

Peter Chang, 11 & Wei Hsung Chen, 12

情同兄弟的美國融合帆船隊

這一隊美國帆船隊，是由一個運動員和一個夥伴所組成。當他們說他們在四歲時（運動員，夥伴六歲）就認識，令我感到有趣而且驚訝的是，他們倆一起長大，他們還可以相處的情同兄弟，（我想，應該是小時候比較沒偏見的因素吧）「我們就像兄弟」，這是很難得的一句話，我一直看到他們互相逗弄對方，那也是很要好的朋友會出現的動作。

我想特奧是非常需要這些人才的，這些人有跟這些運動員相處過有不少經驗，請他們幫忙宣傳，這是一個很好的方法，因為從朋友、親人這一個角度來宣傳，要比以義工、工作人員、廣告、報紙好太多了。

帆船比賽需要的是隊友之間的充分合作，假如船頭和船尾不好好合作，一個往左一個往右，那就只有翻船的份，尤其他們兩人得要一起在船上，所處的環境四面八方都是海洋，你不得對環境界慎恐懼，所以就是要經過無數次的練習，極度熟悉操作，才有辦法完成這種考驗技術、耐力、合作的比賽。

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TEAM LEBANON

Best Sportswoman in Table Tennis

Latifa Amzil is a girl from Morocco. She is 15 years old. In the interview with the Special Olympics Global Youth Summit delegation from Lebanon, Jawdat Al Hajj and Hiba Sami Hammoud, Amzil told us about her experience with Special Olympics and Ireland.

"I am an athlete from Special Olympics Morocco. I have two brothers. I work in embroidery and sewing, and I do sports. I started my participation in Special Olympics four years ago. I have won four gold medals (in Egypt, Fess, Casablanca and in Meekness.) My parents are very supportive to me. I was called the best sportswoman for the 12-15 age group in table tennis.

"I am studying in the Association of Manar. I have many friends in Morocco and also in Special Olympics. In Morocco, people treat me in a very kind way.

"Two days ago I was in the hospital for diarrhea. Now I feel good and I have a game at 2:30. I hope I will win it.

"I am very happy in Ireland. I love to go outside. I have traveled with my family to France and Qatar."



TEAM EGYPT

The Master of Table Tennis

Today I was watching the table tennis competitions when I met a great champion also enjoying the matches, a champion called Ahmed Kaouane.

"I am an athlete of Special Olympics Algeria. I am 21 years old. I have four brothers and a sister. I am the eldest. My father is a teacher. He is the one who takes care of the family. I left school before first grade in high school and now I am working on my own.

"I have been involved in Special Olympics for two years. Yesterday I won a gold medal in the Special Olympics World Summer Games which I am very proud of. I also won a silver medal in the 2002 Special Olympics Middle East/North Africa Regional Games.

"Special Olympics has made great changes in me. It improved my skills and made me play better. It also lets me meet new people and have more friends as well as giving me the opportunity to travel and visit other countries. My family helps me and gives me the courage to participate in Special Olympics.

"Besides table tennis, I also like to play football. My favorite Algerian football player is Rabeh Mager. My favorite football player in the world is Delpiero. I also like to read science books, listen to music and draw.

"My wish is to marry and to have a family of my own whom I will be responsible for."

I have great expectations for Ahmed and think that he will be a famous and successful player in the future.

TEAM POLAND

When we went to the athletics venue, we met the Special Olympics Poland team. I got an interview with Anna Adas.

Anna is 18 years old. She began competing in running in 2000. She got involved in running from her sister, who is in a school for children without mental retardation and is a runner. So as much as she could, Anna has always tried to live up to the example she saw in her sister.

Anna competes in the 100m and 200m. She also likes swimming and football. Since the time she started in competition her life is changing. She feels acceptance from family, school, friends and another people. She has one sister and three brothers.

With Anna was Joanna Styczen, a volunteer with the Special Olympics Poland group. She told me about her stay in Dublin. She feels very well in Ireland, and she is glad that she is involved with Special Olympics. She said, "This sports competition is important for breaking the barriers between people without mental retardation and people with special needs. Special Olympics is one big family."



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TEAM MISSOURI

Striking up the Gold

Joining a crowd of loud and excited cheerleaders, it doesn't take long to figure out from her parents that Keira Joyce from Castle Bar Ireland is in the finals for the doubles event. Keira's mother was very patient with our interviewer, A.J. Hellekson, as he talked with her between Keira's bowling turns. Keira's mother describes her as very shy and intimidated, but it only took a strike in the fourth frame of her game for that shyness to disappear and a high five, a great big jump and a large smile to come beaming from this once shy and quiet athlete. It was a lovely drive all the way out to Blanchardstown and meeting Keira was well worth the trip.

Keira began participating in Special Olympics when she was 9 years of age and has enjoyed bowling, equestrian and table tennis. So far at the World Summer Games in Dublin, Ireland, she has won a gold medal in singles competition, bronze medal in team bowling and is predicted to win the gold in her doubles competition today.

Keira's mother stated that she attended school in Castlebar at St. Anthony's School and graduated from there in 2002. Her mother reports that her schoolteacher had taken her bowling and got her interested, and from that the parents got excited about coaching their child in bowling. Since Keira graduated from school she has been working at a training center and learning different jobs about how to package and work in the supermarket.

Keira's partner, Teresa Keane, met her when they competed in a national bowling tournament in Dublin two years ago. Since then they have become great friends and great bowling partners.

Keira's coach stated that she had done bowling, table tennis and equestrian. When asked what sport she liked best, she grinned and said, "Bowling and staying in the apartments." She has been to at least 10 training sessions while preparing for World Games.

Keira's coach at World Games is Veronica Murry of Gatway, who is very excited to be with her and helping her in the competition.

TEAM JORDAN

We Are the Champions

Great swimmers all around the place, gold medals, enthusiastic volunteers and tears of happiness from the family members: that was the atmosphere when we got to the Aquatics Center.

The one who got my attention was a young man who had his nails colored with red and white; I didn't know why at that time, but then I knew. The young man's name was Charles Restivo, he is 38 years old (he doesn't look like 38; actually he looks like 22 years old) and lives in Canada (now you can figure out why his nails were polished in red and white). Moreover, he lives with his family, because he cannot cook on his own.

Charles has been involved with Special Olympics for 23 years as a swimmer. He also used to practice other sports like soccer, basketball and floor hockey. He was educated in a regular school. "It was great, fantastic," he says. "I don't think that anyone should miss school!" Charles was lucky enough to have everyone's support — his family, friends and coaches. He adds, "My family won't miss national or international Games; they are always there for me, for better or worse."

Charles has been working in Windys restaurant for 15 years. "Most people would work for one day, one week maximum, but I stayed there for 15 years, for I meet a lot of people and I have tons of fun," he said. "Also there is free food."

When I asked Charles what will make him sad, he said, "Leaving Special Olympics." With a smile, he added, "I think I will stop because I have so many Special Olympics bags. Also, hearing the athletes song [May We Never Have to Say Goodbye], because I don't want to say goodbye." When he said that sentence I just felt how much he loves Special Olympics and swimming. Then he changed his mood and said, "All I'm thinking of right now is winning a gold medal."

Charles has won two medals here at the Special Olympic World Games in Ireland: gold for the 100m freestyle and silver for the 400m freestyle. Anyway, the finals are tomorrow, so we hope you will get the gold.

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TEAM PERU

Si que Irlanda es un tesoro

Después de una noche agitada en el centro de Bádminton todos los de destacados deportistas de Irlanda volvieron al centro de bádminton a continuar con los juegos. Carmel Hynes del equipo Irlandés nos contó con mucho orgullo que ayer, el veintisiete de Junio el equipo Irlandés ganó su primera medalla de oro en bádminton. Pudimos verificar el apoyo y la alegría de los atletas, los entrenadores y la gente que presenció los partidos del equipo ya que en todo el día de ayer tuvieron aproximadamente dos mil visitantes!

Como veníamos ya introduciéndola, Carmel es parte del equipo de bádminton. Carmel tiene treinta y dos años y viene practicando todos los deportes que puede desde que es muy pequeña. Cabe resaltar que Carmel quedó sexta en el singles de mujeres aún cuando solo ha jugado este deporte por nueve meses. Ella adora el tenis de mesa y nos contó muy modestamente que quedó segunda en los juego de verano anteriores en Estados Unidos.

Asimismo, Carmel nos contó que estaba muy emocionada de estar participando en estos juegos ya que está en su país y eso la hace muy feliz. Carmel terminó el colegio hace muchos años y ahora trabaja medio tiempo en una tienda muy cerca de su casa. Carmel es muy independiente ya que sabe ir y regresar al trabajo sola.

Carmel nos contó que su familia estaba muy contenta y que la apoyaba en todo momento. Nos llamó mucho la atención el cariño que le tenía a su entrenador ya que el la ha apoyado en todo momento y nos enseñó mucho por que le agradecía constantemente su apoyo incondicional.

Para concluir queríamos contarles que Carmel esta fascinada con todos los artistas que ha conocido en la ceremonia de inauguración y espera poder verlos de nuevo en la ceremonia de clausura.



TEAM SOUTH AFRICA

"I am born on 11 December 1983 at Phadzima village in the remote areas of the Limpopo province in South Africa. I am still attending school in Alexandra Township in the Gauteng Province around Johannesburg area. The name of my school is Nokhuthula Special School.

"I joined Special Olympics in 2001 after I was told about it by my teacher, Lindiwe. Today I feel great. I won a gold medal at the World Games. I don't think I can ask for more than this.

"I humbly request all the people to treat us equally like others and stop laughing and giving us discrediting names. We have our own abilities like any other one. Give us the chance to display our wonderful gifts and help all those who don't know about Special Olympics to have the information.

"The secret to my success is through hard work and believing in me."

TEAM INDIA

Today we interviewed four athletes and one coach from Special Olympics Bharat (India) who are competing in bocce.

One of the athletes was Mahveer, from Delhi, India. He is only 12 years old. Mahveer lives in an orphanage but goes to the YMC School for some education. He won a gold medal before in bocce though he has trained only for the past year.

The other athlete was Geeta Devi from Himachal. She is 16 years old. Geeta goes to a vocational center where all her education is being taken care of. She learns to make bags out of cloth and does embroidery. But she loves to play with her friends the most! She has also won a gold medal before in bocce.

The other two athletes were Ashok and Sacheta who are also 16 years old.

Their coach is also a very focused and confident woman. She runs a school for people with learning disabilities in her country. There are about 30 children in her school.

The Special Olympics India athletes are playing bocce today together as a team and I'm sure they will definitely achieve a lot and will go back to their country making everyone proud.



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TEAM NAMIBIA

Global Youth Summit Presentation

Namibia, Missouri (USA) and Peru Global Youth Summit athletes and partners, in the company of their chaperones, were assigned to conduct a presentation at a conference held at the Trinity College in Dublin on Friday, 27 June, which “highlighted the abilities of people with learning difficulties in many spheres, including as athletes, advocates, volunteers and media presenters.” This presentation centered on the role of the Global Youth Summit participants in relation to the theme of the Summit, “Changing Attitudes — One at a Time (Starting with yourself),” and the Special Olympics Get Into It curriculum. In addition, the groups were expected to give testimonies of their activities in their respective countries, primarily because of their involvement on a sophisticated scale with SO Get Into It.

Ted, the facilitator of this event, went through the introductions to provoke the discussion by asking the participants to make their contributions country by country after he elaborated briefly on what the SO Get Into It initiative is all about.

Kathie Wolfert was kind enough to explain on behalf of the group that so far we have been having lots of fun interviewing athletes from different counties, compiling profiles of different individuals attending the Games and posting this information on the Web site for the world to access. In addition, she indicated that upon returning to our respective countries from which we originate, we will apply most of what we have been discussing as may be suitable from county to county, hoping that we will reach more people in the community, especially through the local schools. In her summary she shared a story of an old folk who was walking along the shore throwing back into the sea shellfish that had washed onto the shore. Someone said to the old folk, “Are you crazy? There are millions of shellfish along this shore. What difference will you make saving a few?” The old folk answered, “As long as I make a difference by saving one of them, that will make a big difference.”

Both partners Freda and Joanna testified how with little resources and so much difficulties encountered, both counties had successfully launched this SO Get Into It in their local schools and how the program was sustained. They further elaborated on what their intentions and strategies would be upon returning to their respective countries.

Andrew’s presentation was a graphic example of the Global Youth Summit’s work and efforts. He indicated that if he had not been involved in this program he would not have been courageous enough to stand before this particular audience to express himself as confidently. This was extremely encouraging and inspiring not only to the audience, but to the partners and chaperones in his company.

This presentation was followed by a question-and-answer section at which the major question raised was the concern of an inclusion program. In response Andrew indicated that the inclusion program was a great challenge to him, considering that he was encouraged to work at a level of other students but sometimes has to remind his teachers to be cautious in presenting materials at a rate suitable for his ability. In fact he realized that other students benefited greatly from these reminders, except that these students were proud to ask. He refuses to be offered an education which is limited or is sympathetic; he wants it to be challenging because he is able.

In conclusion, the three different plenary groups came together to summarize their individual deliberations. Andrew summarized on behalf of the Global Youth Summit team answering the questions asked.

28 JUNE

TEAM ALASKA

Football

Sitting in the athletes' lounge at the 2003 Special Olympic World Summer Games in Dublin, Ireland, we met the traditional football team from Special Olympics Trinidad and Tobago. There were 10 athletes total and they were congratulating each other on their victory. A victory to this team wasn't about winning a gold medal; it was about being part of the Games and playing their best. "My coach always says that we should have fun and enjoy ourselves; it's not about winning," says Justin O'Brien, 24, who also competed in the 1999 World Summer Games in North Carolina, USA, and took the gold for football. The team took the silver medal in their division of six teams, including Germany, Netherlands, Iceland, Qatar and Botswana. Botswana took the gold while the Netherlands took the bronze.

Charles Assee, 17, has been playing football for nine years but has only participated in Special Olympics for one year playing football. "A year ago my coach saw my skill and asked me to participate, and here I am." The team practiced twice a week to prepare for the Games. "I have been playing football since I was small, but have been competing with Special Olympics for five years. I have also played basketball and volleyball with Special Olympics but basketball is by far the best sport," says Devan Mahadeo, 18. "I saw football on television so I stopped track and joined football," says O'Brien. "I didn't even think about it."

They all felt the same way when asked their favorite part about Special Olympics and the World Games. Opening Ceremonies was a big hit. "I saw myself on TV and waved," says Assee. "I hope my mom got to see the Ceremonies back home." They also liked seeing all the people and think the Irish people are really nice. They also like the whole aspect of traveling to a place to compete and be recognized for their abilities. "My favorite part about Ireland is the discos and getting to see all the people," says Assee. When asked what they wanted more than anything in the world Devan and Charles replied with the same response, "We wish for world peace. There is too much crime and war that should come to an end. Everyone should learn to communicate and get along." O'Brien had a different wish, "I wish to go to New York to visit family I really miss."

Devan has gone to a special school for nine years where he heard about Special Olympics. "My teachers are very kind," he says. He lives with his parents and brother. "For fun I hang out with my friends. We go to parties and eat KFC." Charles does very similar activities. "I like to surf the Internet, go the movies and go to the mall," he says. "My favorite food is lasagna." Unlike Devan, Charles goes to a public school. "I take all the core classes and play football for school." When asked what kind of music they like, they all replied in the same way: anything, as long as it has a good beat.

Each has his own plans for when he returns home. "I want to get a job," says Devan. "I would really like to do gardening but the sun is too hot. I think I will do woodwork, making tables and chairs." Charles says, "When I get back I want to get better at football and play for local clubs and hopefully get a scholarship to go on into a league." As for Justin, he already has a study job as a cleaner at a youth facility. "I wash windows, clean floors, clean bathrooms and trim trees."

Their advice for anyone who wants to make it as far as they did is to keep going to school and discipline yourself. You should always work hard and keep going higher; show your best ability. "I am very proud. I am very proud and brave to be part of Special Olympics. And I just want everyone to know, my name, Justin O'Brien, is Irish."



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TEAM POLAND

Nareszcie mieliśmy okazję spotkać zawodników z Polski. Dwie grupy: team ciężarowców oraz grupę lekkiej atletyki.

Z ciężarowcami przeprowadziliśmy wywiad.

Trenerem grupy jest Zdzisław Hryniewski, nauczyciel gimnastyki i przyjaciel zawodników, od 32 lat trener zawodowy w klubach sportowych; najpierw w Poznaniu a teraz w Warszawie.

Od trzech lat trenuje Adama Szymanskiego, który w poniedziałek, w zawodach podnoszenia ciężarów zdobył 2 złote medale i jeden srebrny.

Adam Szymanski ma lat 22. Obecnie jest absolwentem specjalnej szkoły w Grodzisku Mazowieckim. Trening w ciężarach rozpoczął dopiero 3 lata temu. Startuje w grupie 52, 5 – 55 kg.

Wcześniej uprawiał biegi (dokładnie zaczął sportowe życie w 1994 r.) Ma trzech braci i trzy siostry oprócz biegania które uprawia nadal, lubi także jazdę na rolkach, łyżwach, oraz piłkę nożną i koszykówkę. Zapytany czym jest dla niego sport odpowiedział, że :

- a) jest ważny dla swojej rodziny,
- b) czuje się potrzebny i ma satysfakcję z osiągniętych wyników
- c) jest uzależniony od wykonywania różnych zajęć sportowych i nie wyobraża sobie bez tego życia.

Adam Markowski ma lat 19, trenuje od czterech lat, w obecnej Olimpiadzie Specjalnej zdobył 3 srebrne medale.

Chodzi do specjalnej szkoły w Ketrzynie. To Zdzisław który jest nauczycielem WF w jego szkole namówił go do uprawiania sportu. Uprawianie sportu pomogło mu w szkole: "zrobił się bardziej śmiały i zetelny" – mówi z uśmiechem trener.

Razem z siostrą uprawia również lekka atletyka.

To spotkanie upewniło mnie do kontynuowania działalności wolontariackiej i popularyzowania idei włączenia intelektualnie niepełnosprawnych kolegów do społeczeństwa i kreowania świadomości akceptacji i tolerancji dla inności w szkołach masowych.

TEAM CHINA

“起来，不愿做奴隶的人们，把我们的血肉筑成我们新的长城……”中华人民共和国的国歌在爱尔兰都柏林UCD的足球比赛场上响起了，但和往常不一样，歌声不是从最高的颁奖台上传来的，而是出自在足球决赛中功亏一篑的中国队教练席的方向。

中国队是以小组第2名的身份与巴巴多斯队在28日上午的决赛中相遇的。此前，中国队队员多数受到伤病的困扰，以至于教练在排兵布阵时捉襟见肘，再加上对方队员人高马大，所以想获得最后的胜利是相当困难的。

比赛开始后的5分钟双方势均力敌，互有攻守，场面也是非常好看。直到比赛进行到第6分钟，巴巴多斯队队员利用一次反击打破了僵局，随后又趁势连入两球，得到了比赛的主动权。而中国队只是在进行到9分钟时扳回一球。下半场比赛波澜不惊，双方各进一球。最终，巴巴多斯队以4比2的比分战胜了中国队，夺得了2003年国际特奥会男足的金牌。

赛后，中国队队员和在场的中国留学生抱坐一团共唱国歌，在稍显遗憾的同时，展现出了一种不凡的气质。相信他们会鼓起勇气，重拾信心，在不久的将来取得成功。

(郭轶彪REPORT 2003.6.28)