

# THE STORIES

## AFRICA



### CLINTON DELIVERS KEY MESSAGE AT GLOBAL YOUTH FORUM

**By: George Srour, Youth Summit Program Leader**

It's a simple phrase but one that former U.S. President Bill Clinton urged the world to use more often, "I see you."

Fresh off of a visit to White Ring, the floor hockey venue of the 2005 Special Olympics World Winter Games, President Clinton commended the Global Youth Summit participants and more than 300 Japanese youth in attendance for their unwavering commitment and efforts in furthering the Special Olympics movement worldwide.

"My life has been inspired by Special Olympics and the many Americans who have competed in Special Olympics," Clinton said.

The three-hour Global Youth Forum held at the headquarters of the Nagano Prefecture gave individuals the opportunity to exchange ideas and share stories of how Special Olympics has allowed them to change attitudes in their communities about people with intellectual disabilities.

"I started working with my Special Olympics partner, Krystal, in my biology class," Global Youth Summit participant Lee Tyrell said. "Once I got into it, other people began seeing they too could make a difference by helping out."

After several participants shared their experiences with emcee and Special Olympics Board Member Bart Connor and Special Olympics Chairman and CEO Timothy Shriver, Clinton offered some advice which quickly became the mantra of the afternoon.

"In Central Africa, there is a tribe who greets one another not by saying, 'Hello,' but, 'I see you,'" Clinton said. "Most of us spend our whole lives not seeing people, but my advice is simple: you're beautiful, give people the chance to see you."

Other celebrities and Special Olympics Board Members such as Rev. Joseph Run and Vanessa Williams facilitated discussion and the presentation of initiatives undertaken by youth at Nagano schools leading up to the Games. From seeing increases in participation levels in Unified Sports® to working with Special Olympics athletes in the classroom, Forum participants provided stories headlined by hope.

"After developing the Unified Sports program in the capital of Namibia, we have seen an outpouring of people who want to get involved," one Global Youth Summit participant said. "We have 400 students who want to help, and the number keeps on growing."

Even those new to the movement have embraced the opportunity Special Olympics has given them.

# THE STORIES

## FAMILIES PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR ATHLETES

**By: Cindy Carstens (Namibia) & Kartika Tjan (Indonesia), athletes  
Ngawa Mumba (Namibia) & Umay Indra (Indonesia), partners**

Family support is very important in any Special Olympics event because it brings joy and strength to competing athletes. Many families have traveled from all over the world to Japan to support their loved ones at the 2005 Special Olympics World Winter Games here in Nagano.

“It is amazing to see my daughter join Special Olympics,” Nancy Crawford, a parent from Special Olympics USA said at the Alpine skiing area today.

Crawford is a proud mother of nine-time World Games champion Katie Crawford, 36. Katie is an Alpine skiing athlete who represents Team USA. Nancy feels that Special Olympics is an important part of her family life as it has brought joy and happiness within the family.

“Unified Sports® has a strong base in the state of Indiana,” Crawford said. “My husband and I have been participating in Unified Sports as Katie’s partners in both speed [skating] and dance skating.”

Global Youth Summit participants from Namibia and Indonesia discovered the wealth of family support at the World Games in Nagano and this story is confirmed by another family from Norway.

Eric Smith Wang, who is 66 years old and lives outside Oslo, was traveling to Japan to lend his support to his son, Morten Wang, who represents Special Olympics Norway in Alpine skiing.

Wang and his wife have a very good relationship with their son even though Morten lives by himself. They have been supporting him since Morten’s first Special Olympics Games in 2001 when Morten won three medals, and these are the only Games that Mrs. Wang has been unable to attend.

With the help of his parents and through interaction with his friends, Morten feels that he is well-prepared for the Games. His parents have also helped to change how he and other friends of his with intellectual disabilities are treated.



## INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLS

**By: Cindy Carstens, athlete & Ngawa Mumba, partner & Rafeal Aluteni, chaperone**

Today we had the chance to interview people who love Special Olympics with a passion—a group of school children from Toyeshina Higashi who are about 10-11 years of age. As a big group, they all love football (soccer), basketball, Japanese card games and chess.

The school has been heavily involved with the Special Olympics Get Into It™ curriculum, even making banners to support athletes not only from Japan but also from around the world. Since Special Olympics is not highly recognized in Japanese schools, Toyeshina Higashi wants to make the effort to go around to other schools and share the wonderful experience they have had during the 2005 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Nagano.

First of all, they hope more people will tune in to media coverage of this week’s events. After the Games, they hope to persuade other schools to participate through PowerPoint presentations, skits, songs and sport demonstrations, many of which have already been talked about by members of the Global Youth Summit.

Toyeshina Higashi would like to send a message to the whole world to encourage them to get involved and become active in Special Olympics. Their wish is to see a lot of people become volunteers and see Special Olympics Nippon (Japan) grow.



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## **MEDIA! HOW INVOLVED ARE THEY?**

**By: Cindy Carstens, athlete & Ngawa Mumba, partner**

**Pictures: Film Director Kenichi Oguri**

Getting off the bus at the cross country venue for the 2005 Special Olympics World Winter Games, we were greeted by warm and sunny weather. I must say we, the Namibian Team, have never had an appreciation for the sun as much we did today. We casually wandered around for a while, trying to find someone we could interview in English or an interpreter who could translate for us.

After 15 minutes, we finally met someone we could interview. We were introduced to a Japanese film director, Kenichi Oguri. This man isn't just any ordinary film director, but he is the only Japanese film director and producer ever to do work with and for Special Olympics. In seven years he had the opportunity to make three of Special Olympics' best documentaries. His first piece of work for Special Olympics was "Another Olympics: Another Dream of the Kennedys", which was followed by "Able" and "Host Towns".

Director Oguri is currently working on "the most extraordinary project of his life." He chose nine Special Olympics Nippon (Japan) athletes to work on the filming project. The film is titled "Believe" and it is scheduled for to be released in August 2005. The athletes are in charge of doing the actual filming, capturing all of the still photos and they have to do the interviews themselves.

"The problem is that we do not have athletes in the media and this is why they [the athletes] are ignored by the world," Oguri emphasized. "This is why I chose to have Special Olympics athletes help me work on this film project."

The athletes interview just about any one as long as they can get a Special Olympics story out of them.

It was very difficult asking him questions, because we weren't really prepared for an interview with a film director. Oguri is 57 years old and a graduate of Niho University, holding a Bachelor of Arts in Media and Film Production. Soon after obtaining his degree he worked as a freelance journalist and film director. He's now been on the job for 34 years.

"None of my films are famous, but all of the productions I have done for Special Olympics are widely loved," said Oguri.

Oguri has a great love for the athletes of Special Olympics. He hopes his work will encourage athletes to work hard to achieve their goals, no matter what happens.

"The worst thing is for a human to give up the things they love just to make it in life."



# THE STORIES

## **SPECIAL OLYMPICS NAMIBIA — WEBINAR**

**By: Cindy Carstens, Athlete & Ngawa Mumba, Partner**

History was made on 5 March 2005, when the 2005 Special Olympics Global Youth Summit participants held the first-ever Webinar Conference Call during the 2005 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Nagano, Japan.

The only Special Olympics Africa Program to be part of the Webinar was Special Olympics Namibia. For us, Cindy Carstens and Ngawa Mumba, it was the proudest moment in our lives with Special Olympics.

On a personal level, it was an exciting yet nerve-racking moment. We couldn't help hoping that nothing would go wrong. We give our thanks to Ron and Rafael. Had it not been for them, we would have never had the chance to sell Special Olympics Africa.

In order for the Webinar to kick off, we needed to develop a PowerPoint presentation about Special Olympics Namibia and how we have used Special Olympics Get Into It™ as a means of athlete and volunteer recruitment. The presentation was then shared with the rest of the Webinar participants — Romania, El Salvador and Panama.

Two Romanian Schools and the Windhoek International School in Namibia were the only two groups outside of Japan who could receive the visuals of the presentations. The atmosphere was a bit edgy because we were more worried about whether or not our presentations were good enough. And yes, it turns out that the Namibian presentation impressed everyone.

We would love to see Special Olympics Programs in Africa start the SO Get Into It program and, as a result, use the Webinar system as a way of exchanging ideas and discussing challenges. We have a lot more to gain, as National Programs, by doing something like the Webinar once a month.

We currently are designing an action plan with the help of our National Sports Director, Rafael, for the SO Get Into It Namibia group at the Windhoek International School. Cindy and I want to grow the program such that we have at least two schools in each of the 13 regions with SO Get Into It programs by the end of the year.

We think that Special Olympics does not realize the magnitude of the Webinar program. We are busy organizing a Youth Forum in Namibia as a means of communicating to the rest of Namibian youth. This idea was conceived right after the Webinar. Africa will benefit from this; it is a less expensive exercise than travelling.



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## **SPECIAL OLYMPICS SOUTH AFRICA SET PERSONAL RECORDS**

**By: Matthew Van Eeden, Partner & Samuel Selepe, Special Olympics USA**

Pamela Langille is from New Hampshire, USA. She was born on 22 May 1981 and she has a twin sister named Patricia. She has four brothers and five sisters.

She got involved in Special Olympics through her school when she was 8 years old. The sports that she likes are basketball and cross country skiing.

Her family, including her mother and twin sister, are here to see her compete. Her mother is very supportive, driving Pamela to Special Olympics events and helping to organize the annual fundraiser for Special Olympics New Hampshire, the Penguin Plunge.

Pamela has been to the World Games before. In 1999, she competed in volleyball at the Special Olympics World Summer Games held in North Carolina, winning the bronze medal. At home, Pamela works in a pet store in her hometown and loves to work with animals.

Pamela's hobbies are reading, bike riding and watching movies—especially those with her favorite actor, Brad Pitt.

Her host town was Miasa Village and the people there were very friendly, especially her host family. The highlight of the week for Pamela was the chance to taste lots of Japanese food.

Pamela loves Special Olympics because it allows her to meet new friends, learn about other people, and travel and compete with other athletes. Although she traveled for more than 20 hours to Japan because of a missed flight, she is excited to be here, learning about the Japanese culture and language.

## **SPECIAL OLYMPICS VOLUNTEER: 20 YEARS AND GOING STRONG**

**By: Matthew Van Eeden, Partner & Samuel Selepe, Athlete**

Cindy is from Special Olympics Team USA and has been involved with Special Olympics for more than 20 years. She started as a volunteer and is now a head coach. She has been to five Special Olympics World Games, the last one being the 2001 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Anchorage, Alaska.

Cindy loves the opportunity Special Olympics athletes gain as athletes are given a chance to do their very best. Cindy says it is rewarding to train with the athletes and to see their performance improve.

The sport that she likes most is snowshoeing, but she also coaches athletics. When they were in their host town of Chino, they had the privilege of seeing the Law Enforcement Torch Run® for Special Olympics come through the town.

Cindy works at an agency that finds jobs for people with disabilities called the Open Door Centre, where she is a supervisor. She is happy to be in Japan and hopes that all Special Olympics athletes achieve their dreams at these World Games.

# THE STORIES

## **SPECIAL OLYMPICS TEAM USA SET PERSONAL RECORDS**

**By: Samuel Selepe, Athlete & Matthew van Eeden, Partner**

Debra Frost is from Oregon, USA. She is an avid fan of Alpine skiing and a variety of other sports. Her hobbies include hiking, working with animals and spending time with Special Olympics athletes.

Frost got involved in Special Olympics about four years ago when she was skiing with a friend who was a coach for Special Olympics and her friend offered her the chance to be a coach, too.

Frost's most exciting moments come from seeing athletes with a smile on their faces and when they win a medal.

The host town that she went to was called Yamanouchi, meaning "inside the mountains." She said that they treated them very well, just like they were real family.

Frost currently works in Redmond, Oregon, in a gas company. Her favorite color is red and her favorite foods are Mexican, Japanese and Italian.



## **SPECIAL OLYMPICS CYPRUS SET PERSONAL RECORD**

**By: Matthew Van Eeden, Partner & Samuel Selepe, Athlete  
Special Olympics South Africa**

It may have taken more than 48 hours for Eleni Rossides of Nicosia, Cyprus, to reach Nagano, but only a few days into her stay, she's more than glad she came. The 41-year-old Head of Delegation leading Special Olympics Cyprus loves watching the Alpine skiing competitions and looks forward to the remaining days of competition.

Rossides got involved in Special Olympics through her school, studying subjects that deal with intellectual disabilities. As a Ph.D, she has published many articles addressing learners with special needs. Currently, Rossides serves as Special Olympics Europe/Eurasia's sports advisor for Motor Activities Training Programs.

"It is fun to work with athletes," said Rossides, who owns her own private school in Cyprus for children with intellectual disabilities. "Working with the athletes gives me emotional satisfaction."

Rossides believes that athletes should never be given "no" as an answer. She loves to give to others and hopes that she can perpetuate this belief among others. Rossides has chosen to devote her entire life to athletes and she never tires of seeing their smiles.

Among other things, Rossides is a vegetarian and her favorite color is white because it's a sign of purity. She encourages all to visit her home country which she believes is the most beautiful island in the world, earning its name "Island of Paradise."



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