

THE STORIES

LATIN AMERICA

“I AM JUST HUMAN”

**By: Miguel Moran, athlete & Toribio Solis, partner
Special Olympics El Salvador**

Today at Big Hat, one of the venues being used for the 2005 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Nagano, Japan, we met Loretta Claiborne. Simple but energetic, Loretta is a Global Spokesperson for Special Olympics and her story is one that resonates with inspiration in countries all over the globe.

“Her story has changed my life,” said a reporter from NHK while we were interviewing her.

When she was a little girl back in the United States, she dreamed about becoming a nurse, a veterinarian and an athlete. Her desire to become an athlete was driven by the hope of not being called names and earning the respect of those around her.

“There was a time when I was not proud of being Loretta Claiborne,” she said. “I am a person with intellectual disabilities, but I’m not afraid of trying new things. I am proud of who I am.”

Claiborne accomplished her dream of becoming an athlete by joining Special Olympics and her experiences with the organization have been the highlight of her life.

Her message to every teenager and children of the world with intellectual disabilities is that they should never let anyone underestimate the power of what a Special Olympics athlete can do. They have the power through school, through work and through their social interactions to change attitudes, one person at a time.



SPECIAL OLYMPICS PARENTS PROUDLY SUPPORT THEIR CHILDREN IN JAPAN

By: Miguel Moran, athlete & Toribio Solis, partner, Special Olympics El Salvador

In a wonderful environment full of positive energy and a large crowd, an enthusiastic man with a loud voice stood out at Hakuba Village, the 2005 Special Olympics World Winter Games venue for cross country skiing. This man, coming all the way from Utah, USA, is the proud parent of Special Olympics athlete Patrick Phillips.

Dalin Phillips, 54, is no stranger to the world of Special Olympics. He and his wife have eight children: four boys and four girls—all involved in Special Olympics.

Since his son was born, Phillips has always been a supporter of Special Olympics. Patrick has been participating in Special Olympics since he was just 8 years old and today he competes in cross country skiing in both the 3K and 5K race. In spite of the fact that the whole family is not in Japan, they were supporting him from home back in Utah, and they are very proud of Patrick’s effort in competitions.

Phillips and his family are an example of good will and dedication; they have adopted a young man named Paul, who has Down syndrome. Four members of the family teach special education at various colleges and institutions and they also spend much of their time in the community, helping to support the local Special Olympics Program and Utah State University.

At Utah State, Phillips put together a campaign to raise US\$7,000 to pay for Patrick’s trip to Nagano and the Winter Games. He is happy to have had the chance to make the trip as well.

“I really like Japan. Everybody is so friendly and kind all the time,” said Phillips.

His message to all parents from around the world is that the times have changed and now there are so many opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities that there is no reason why anyone should hold back when talking about them.



THE STORIES



HOSTS FROM CHINO CITY SUPPORT SNOWBOARDING ATHLETES

**By: Miguel Moran, athlete & Toribio Solis, partner
Special Olympics El Salvador**

Today at Lizuna Resort, the snowboarding venue for the 2005 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Nagano, we interviewed Michael Rice, one of five heads of delegation for Team USA.

So far, Rice has had a wonderful time in Nagano.

“The people are fantastic, they are very kind,” Rice exclaimed. The people from Chino city, the host town where Team USA stayed before the Opening Ceremonies, were especially wonderful, supporting the snowboarding athletes. They lined the course, waving World Games and U.S. flags.

Rice has been involved in Special Olympics for 18 years and he started volunteering when he was in college. His best experience in Japan was when they went to the floor hockey venue. Special Olympics Japan was playing against Team USA, but even some Japanese fans were rooting for Team USA.

What Rice likes the most about Special Olympics athletes is that they don't compete for money and they don't compete for fame, but they compete because for the pure love of sports.



THE MEDIA A VERY IMPORTANT PART OF THE 2005 SO WINTER GAMES

**By: Miguel Moran, athlete & Toribio Solis, partner
Special Olympics El Salvador**

We had the opportunity to meet Henry Moretti, a 45-year-old man from the United States who has trained and competed in every Special Olympics sport aside from gymnastics and equestrian.

At the 2005 Special Olympics World Winter Games, Moretti is a member of the media team, doing interviews with athletes, coaches and many others who are involved in the World Winter Games.

In the United States, Moretti works for a TV program on Cox Sports Television, a local channel transmitted by cable. Along with his peers who also have intellectual disabilities, they control the sound, lights and the production of the program.

The TV program airs once a month and currently they are shooting for the March and April program here in Nagano, Japan.

Moretti's message to other people with intellectual disabilities is very simple. “Get involved in Special Olympics and if you cannot play, join me in the media,” said Moretti. “It's a great feeling to show what I can do, and if I can do it, others can too.”



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ACHIEVING GOALS...AS LONG AS I STAND

By: Julio Barrera, athlete & Harold Pérez, partner
Special Olympics Panama

After an early but beautiful hour and 30 minute bus ride, our team arrived at Yamanouchi Town where the Alpine Skiing competition was taking place. Although the sun was brightly shining, we were all cold and Julio (athlete) was very excited because he had never seen snow before in his life, and this was something that he always dreamed of doing.

During our walk around the venue, we met an outstanding athlete called Joshua Smith. Joshua is an athlete from Special Olympics Maryland and he is 22 years old. Since he got involved 15 years ago, Joshua has had many opportunities. Here at the 2005 Special Olympics World Winter Games, Joshua is competing as an alpine skier, but he has also competed in power lifting, swimming, riding, cross country skiing, and tracking field.

"My friends support me all the time", were Joshua's words as he talked about his home state.

He said the program is well known with hundreds of athletes (in Maryland), and that families, friends and companies alike are very supportive.

Joshua currently works in a food store bagging, arranging packages, and making sure that everything is well done. When we were talking to Joshua, we also met his parents and aunt.

They told us that they had to raise funds and save as much money as possible in order to bring the whole family to Nippon. The contributions and inspiration Joshua received from people such as his grandmother have meant very much to him. As he prepares to compete during these Winter Games, Joshua hopes to meet new friends and enjoy his time in Japan.



TODOS SOMOS TRIUNFADORES

By: Julio Barrera, athlete, Harold Perez, partner
Special Olympics Panama

Hola...realmente nuestra jornada de hoy fue algo emocionante y distinto ya que recorrimos tres diferentes venues en la ciudad de Nagano. De los tres sitios nos llamo la atencion el equipo de Mejico despues de una partida de Hockey en el Big Hat contra Sudafrica. Conversamos con la jefe de delegación Laura Vaca, quien estuvo comentando sobre la experiencia de ella junto al quipo en general. Nos dijo que era su primera vez despues de involucrarse hace siete meses en OE de tener la oportunidad de compartir a nivel mundial una experiencia tan inolvidable; conocio Olimpiadas Especiales despues que el Director Ejecutivo de su pais la invitara a los días de entrenamiento; nos dice, "Si se puede repetir otra vez, increíble!". Tambien nos comenta que una de las lecciones que mas ha aprendido a traves de los atletas es que te sensibilizas y aprendes a ser fuerte; "Apesar de que acaban de perder, entienden que aqui el mundo no se detiene".

De verdad, este es unos de los momentos que mas nos motivo... el ver la sonrisa apesar del dolor que obviamente se debiese sentir cuando pierdes una partida despues de arduas horas de entrenamiento.

Laura nos indico que no tiene queja alguna de Olimpiadas Especiales; de lo contrario, le fascina ver y experimentar en vivo el ambiente tan positivo que se vive dentro la organizacion. "Estoy muy alegre de tener hasta el momento mas de 4,000 atletas y esta creciendo cada vez mas", indico Laura.

Julio, quien llevo acabo las preguntas, le pidio a la señora Laura que reconociera que el mayor problema de las personas que ignoran el programa de Olimpiadas Especiales y que regularmente se burlan de las peronas con discapacidad; ella sencillamente dio un mensaje preciso y conciso que la gente debe saber: "Que conozcan primero y despues opine!"



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THERE IS A PLACE FOR EVERYONE

By: Team Panama

As the Alpine skiing athletes were getting ready for the awards ceremony at Yamanouchi Town in Nagano, Special Olympics Ireland volunteer Kevin Hughes waited to greet his delegation.

“It is so exciting to be here supporting my national delegation,” said the 40-year-old volunteer who decided to achieve his goal of coming to Nagano to help his delegation, even though initially it seemed to be impossible.

Before the 2005 Special Olympics World Winter Games, Hughes decided to raise funds to come to Japan. According to Hughes, he had to ask for international help to collect enough money to join other volunteers around the world in these Winter Games.

“To find economical support is very hard and I knew that if I wanted to come to Japan, I had to do it by my own,” stated Hughes. Even though the task was not that easy, he is in Japan, supporting the 29 members of the Special Olympics Ireland delegation, and he had the opportunity to talk about some of his interesting experiences with Special Olympics.

“The most memorable moment that I remember since I have been involved in Special Olympics was when an athlete broke in emotion when he received his gold medal,” explained Hughes as he was asked to tell an important anecdote about Special Olympics. “There are a lot of experiences that I recall in these few years, and each one has marked me forever,” he added.

“The athlete’s joy is what prompts me to continue working hard for Special Olympics,” concluded Hughes. “There is a place for everyone and I should give that place to people who need and deserve it.”

