

SHARE:

[Join Our Email List](#)

**Special
Olympics**
Connecticut

[Donate Now](#)[Visit Website](#)

Special Olympics Connecticut Newsletter

APRIL 2025







April is National Volunteer Month. 💖

From leadership, to sports, to health and special events, our volunteers do it all and we thank them for the many ways they enrich our athletes' lives! **Meet Desirae** [here](#).

Teams Triumph at Traditional Basketball Tournament Presented by Webster Bank



Our Traditional Basketball Tournament and Individual Skills Competition presented by Webster Bank took place on Saturday, March 22nd. Thirty-seven teams representing 19 Local Programs participated at 8 venues in Waterbury. These venues included ACES at Chase, Duggan Pre-K - 8, Holy Cross High School, Jonathan Reed Elementary School, Kennedy High School, Waterbury Career Academy, Waterbury PAL, and West Side Middle School. Opening Ceremonies took place at Holy Cross and Waterbury PAL. In addition to Webster Bank, event sponsors included:

 		Basketball Tournament	
<p align="center"><u>Presenting Sponsor</u></p> 			
<p align="center"><u>Gold Sponsor</u></p> 		<p align="center"><u>Silver Sponsor</u></p> 	
<p align="center"><u>Supporting Sponsors</u></p> <p align="center">City of Waterbury, Mayor's Office Hubbard-Hall Ion Bank Foundation Thomaston Savings Bank Foundation</p>			
<p align="center"><u>Host Sites</u></p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">          </div>			
<p align="center"><u>Year-Round Partner Sponsors</u></p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">         </div>			
<p align="center"><u>Year-Round Suppliers</u></p> <p align="center">Coca-Cola Beverages Northeast - Foxwoods Resort Casino - Hearst Connecticut Media Group - iHeart Media - N&D Sports NBC CT/Telemundo - Pepperidge Farm - WORX</p>			

Coming up! The Law Enforcement Torch Run® statewide on June 4th, 5th, and 6th. Summer Games weekend at Southern Connecticut State University, Yale West Campus and Hamden Hall on June 6th, 7th and 8th. **For Summer Games volunteer opportunities, click [here](#).**

Awards Dinner Held to Honor Exceptional Groups and Individuals

Our 2025 Hall of Fame inductees and award recipients were celebrated at a dinner at the Aqua Turf Club on March 26th. More than 700 guests attended the dinner which was presented by Tokio Marine LLC, sponsored by Webster Bank, and hosted by the Calvanese Family. Honorees included:



Outstanding Local Program Award - Special Olympics Team North Haven. Team North Haven demonstrates great leadership and spirit and ensures every participant feels valued and empowered. Members' advocacy for inclusion has transformed their community, making it a more accepting place for people with intellectual disabilities. The Team is led by Local Coordinator Ria Violano.



Norman Hanenbaum Lifetime Service Award - Eversource Snowmakers. Eversource's snowmaking operation dates back to 2002. Volunteers strive to dedicate 100 hours to making man-made snow annually so our athletes can compete in cross-country skiing and snowshoeing during Winter Games. The group is comprised of current and retired Eversource employees and led by Andy Oullette.



Community Leadership Award - The Mohegan Tribe. The Mohegan Tribe has supported SOCT for over 20 years. Members are involved as coaches, officials, and fundraisers. Through their efforts and dedication to supporting SOCT, Mohegan Sun has become Presenting Sponsor of our Unified Sports® Fall Festival and the host of our Over the Edge event - which has raised \$1.5 million to date!



Susan Saint James Award - the Necci Family. The Necci family has been volunteering for our organization since the 1980s. Matt was Board Chair, his father Ray helped build our partnership with Northeast Utilities (now Eversource), his daughters and nephew participate in Unified Sports®, and his mom and wife have had supporting roles.



Eunice Murtha Award for Philanthropy - Keith Moon. Keith is a former Board Member and founder of the Hotchkiss School Swimathon which has raised \$30,000+ in 30 years. The funding allows us to partner with Special Olympics Slovakia to provide programming to children living in Slovakia who were displaced by the war in the Ukraine.



Shriver Family Award - The Michaud Family. The Michauds have been the heart and soul of the Special Olympics Mystic/Ledyard and New London Wildcats programs for many years. Family members have been and continue to be involved as athletes, Unified Sports® partners, coaches, and volunteers.



Lew Perkins Coach Award - Amanda Renaud. Amanda has been a leader of our Special Olympics Farmington Valley program for more than 15 years. As Local Coordinator, she manages every aspect of the program, including paperwork, securing uniforms and equipment, coordinating schedules, and driving athletes to practices and tournaments.



Sheila Schmidt Award - Kevin Fitzgerald. Kevin has supported our organization for 25+ years. He's been involved as a Unified Sports® partner, coach, Local Coordinator, committee member, venue director, and fundraiser. Kevin's leadership as the Hamden-New Haven Local Coordinator set the standard for ensuring athletes have access to the best opportunities.



Eunice Kennedy Shriver Award - Robin Batchleder. Robin embodies the spirit of Special Olympics and has been involved as an athlete, volunteer, Global Messenger, and Keynote Speaker at major SOCT events. She has also participated in the Penguin Plunge and Over the Edge. Robin is a team player, inspiration to her teammates and strong, dedicated advocate for inclusion.

Meet more of this year's award winners in our next newsletter!

Pep Rally with ESPN Celebrates Unified Teams at West Hartford High Schools



Special Olympics and ESPN teamed up for a pep rally to honor Conard and Hall High Schools' Unified Sports® participants for meeting national standards of excellence in the areas of inclusion, advocacy, and respect. During the event, which took place at Conard High School on March 28th, student athletes participated in Unified cornhole and basketball and cheered loudly as their new Unified Champion School Banner was unveiled. ESPN's Victoria Arlen co-emceed the event with students, ESPN employees volunteered and Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz was a special guest speaker.

"Our Special Olympics Unified Sports® programs are an incredible source of pride and inspiration. It is wonderful to see the talents and motivation of the student athletes and the collaboration and friendships among the peer partners," said Superintendent Paul Vicinus.

The West Hartford Unified Sports® program is one of three Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools® programs across the country being honored by ESPN this year with in-person celebrations. Additionally, the West Hartford Unified Team was 1 of 33 high schools across the country selected for the 2024 ESPN Honor Roll.

ESPN is the Global Presenting Sponsor of Special Olympics Unified Sports®, having proudly supported Unified Sports® since 2013.

Unified Sports® Takes Center Court at Mohegan Sun



Special Olympics Unified Sports® teammates from 16 high schools across the state enjoyed the thrill and honor of getting to play half-time games in front of a crowd at Mohegan Sun Arena during the CIAC Basketball Championship, March 15th and 16th.

The schools represented include Bethel, Bloomfield, Bunnell (Stratford), Ellington, Fitchburg (Groton), Hale-Ray (Moodus), Kennedy (Waterbury), Lyme-Old Lyme, Newington, Newtown, Norwich Free Academy, Oxford, Pomperaug (Southbury), Southington, Valley Regional (Deep River), and Windsor High Schools.

Unified teammates from Oxford High School took on opponents from Windsor High School in the first-ever Connecticut Unified Level 1 Championship game at Mohegan Sun. Oxford edged out Windsor in a very close and exciting game - ending it with a three-point basket made at the buzzer!

Penguin Plunge Participation Exceeds Expectations



Our Penguin Plunge events were hugely successful thanks to many bold and caring individuals coming together to raise funds for our athletes - including 400 new participants. Highlights include:

- Seven community Penguin Plunge fundraisers completed - including events in Brookfield, Fairfield, Groton, Middletown, Monroe, and Tolland.
- Close to 900 participants - including over 400 first-time Penguin Plungers!
- Over \$275k raised!

- Top fundraisers included SOCT Athletes Logan Rosenberg of the Special Olympics Enfield All-Stars and David Dennin and Danny Kenny from Special Olympics Trumbull.
- Un-wave-ering support from our friends in law enforcement at all events.

Penguin Plunge season is winding down, but not over yet. With continuing opportunities to do-it-yourself and plunge anytime and anywhere or participate in a mobile plunge, more people will get in the action and in the water to support our athletes before the month's end.

Click for more info: [Do-It-Yourself Plunge / Through April](#)

[Mobile Penguin Plunge \(the Plunge that comes to you!\) / Through April](#)

Noteworthy News



For the second year, high school teammates of all abilities had the opportunity to participate in a Unified basketball tournament at UConn's Gampel Pavilion. Prior to the games, members of UConn's Community Outreach-SOCT Club ran drills with the Unified teams.



Students and faculty members at the Hopkins School hosted a dance for our athletes on April 4th. The theme was "Party Animal" and attendees had a "paws-atively" fantastic time socializing and dancing the night away with their friends!



Students at Glastonbury High School hosted an Elementary Unified Sports® culminating event on April 5th. Enthusiastic and upbeat athletes and



Albertus Magnus College hosted a Unified Basketball Tournament on March 21st. Participants included teammates from six transition programs

partners from surrounding communities came together to get moving and have fun with one another.

including Hamden, Branford, Southington, New Haven, Milford and the Amity Transition Academy.



For the very first time, Unified teammates participated in the NE FIRST Robotics Competition in Hartford on April 1st. Athletes from Valley Regional High School and Farmington High School were able to take part in the competition thanks to support from their coaches, mentors, and partners. The event shows how Unified Sports® can inspire inclusion and collaboration beyond the playing field.



The spring sports season kicked off with a Unified Sports® Day at Daisy Ingraham Elementary School in Westbrook on April 4th. During the event, aspiring athletes learned about the role of a quarterback, played flag tag, and participated in passing drills which also served as an activity for them to learn each others' names. Middle school youth leaders led the drills and served as team managers.

Free Resources to Care for Loved Ones

To show our appreciation for all you've done for Special Olympics Connecticut, we would like to offer you something in return. Something we hope will have a positive impact on you and your family. If you're like many people, creating or updating your will, trust and other important documents is something that often falls to the bottom of the to-do list. But planning can help you care for your loved ones and offer significant peace of mind. And it doesn't have to be complicated.

We hope our **free publications** will help you get started. Some of the information available includes:

- Considerations for taking care of a loved one with special needs, parents or elder family members
- Tips for choosing an executor
- Creating an Advance Care Directive
- Why you need a digital estate plan

You'll find a complete list of free publications **here**.

Year-Round Partner Sponsors



Year-Round Suppliers



Unified Sports® Sponsors



**CONNECTICUT
CHAPTER**
CLUB MANAGEMENT
ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA



Visit soct.org.

Contact us at 203-230-1201 or specialolympicsct@soct.org.

Special Olympics Connecticut, INC | 2666 State St Suite 1 | Hamden, CT 06517 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!