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2013 Special Olympics BC Summer Games a stirring success

Nearly 600 medals awarded in Langley as more than 1,100 athletes inspired everyone watching

The largest Special Olympics BC Summer Games in SOBC history was a huge success in Langley July 11 to 14, with 1,136 athletes from communities all over the province and the Yukon coming together to compete and inspire.

Nearly 600 medals were awarded in 11 sports as the athletes put on a stirring display of the Special Olympics spirit of true sportsmanship, inclusion, inspiration, and joy.

“The courage and determination with which these athletes competed in every event was remarkable to behold. There is no limit to how hard they try. And the Games showed there is no limit to what they can do. They were incredible to watch,” said Games Chair Arne Olson.

The impact of Special Olympics was abundantly on display during the 2013 Provincial Games. SOBC – Langley athletes Joshua and Jaykob Low both did well in the Games and happily came home with medals – gold for softball player Jaykob and silver for swimmer Joshua – and their mother Merry also shared how Special Olympics has made “life-changing differences” for Joshua.

“Joshua was sick from the time we brought him home. He endured heart surgery at six months and again at two. Then at age four he was diagnosed with cancer. He spent many years in hospital and Canuck Place with not a lot of hope for a long life,” Low wrote. “About four years ago, Josh began Special Olympics, and now at 21 is a healthy, happy athlete who came home from the Games with a silver medal.

“But much more important [than the medal] is the health that he has gained back, and the fact that at 21 he is still here and going strong, with great aspirations of a long sporting future. Thanks to Special Olympics I’m not sure I remember the last time he was in hospital.”

An exceptional amount of dedicated volunteers gave their time and generous efforts to make the Games a reality. More than 300 volunteer coaches put in so much time to support the athletes throughout their Games experience and prepare them to be able to perform at their best on this significant stage. And local volunteers responded enthusiastically to the appeal issued to support the SOBC Summer Games, with 1,200 people signing on to help bring the Games to life.

"I think the 2013 SOBC Summer Games was a great success. It was well organized and very well orchestrated overall. The athletes and volunteer coaches were so inspiring both on and off the playing fields, and we so appreciated the 1,200 volunteers who worked so hard to deliver such a rewarding and memorable experience for everyone," SOBC Chair Pam Keith said.

"I was also really pleased to see how many Games volunteers came up to me afterward to ask how they can continue being involved with Special Olympics. In addition to being an amazing experience in itself, I think this Games will leave a great legacy of appreciation and awareness for Special Olympics."

Results from the 2013 SOBC Summer Games will determine which B.C. and Yukon athletes will advance to the 2014 Special Olympics Canada Summer Games set to be held in Vancouver.

Media resources

High-resolution photos available for media use: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/specialolympicsbc/sets>

Results: <http://www.specialolympics.bc.ca/2013-sobc-summer-games-results>

Regional team lists (with hometowns/SOBC community programs):
<http://www.specialolympics.bc.ca/2013-sobc-summer-games-regional-teams>

More Games quotes and anecdotes: <http://www.specialolympics.bc.ca/news/2013/07/16/looking-back-inspiring-heartwarming-provincial-games>

Inspiring sponsor support

The 2013 SOBC Summer Games would not have been possible without the generous support of our sponsors, including:

- SOBC Provincial Sponsors: Goldcorp, the Government of B.C., the New Car Dealers Association of B.C., Safeway, and Staples;
- Games Platinum Sponsors: the Township of Langley, the Langley School District #35, and media sponsors Langley Advance, Langley Times, and CTV British Columbia;
- Games Gold Sponsors: the Canadian Progress Club, the City of Langley, Goldcorp, and Super Save Group;
- Games Silver Sponsors: Canadian Union of Public Employees 403, Canadian Horizons Land Investment Corp., Christian Life Assembly, Northwest Tank Lines Inc., and Scotiabank;
- Closing Ceremonies and Dance Sponsor: Ron Lloyd;
- Family & Friends Program: Cascades Casino Resort;
- Games Bronze Sponsors: Aldergrove Financial Group, BC Insulators, Bonetti Meats, JD Farms, Preston Chevrolet Buick GM Cadillac Ltd., and Eric Woodward;
- and many Friends of the Games and Draft an Athlete supporters – our sincere thanks to all.

Opening Ceremonies

On July 11 at the Langley Events Centre, feelings of pride, emotion, and excitement resonated through the Games Opening Ceremonies, as families, friends, sponsors, sports celebrities, and fans came together to celebrate the athletes who had worked so hard to get to Langley. The event turned the spotlight on the Regional teams, as their official entrance into the ceremony was the focal point of the celebration and a big highlight.

The stirring and entertaining ceremony was hosted by Ann Luu, Co-Host and Traffic Specialist for CTV Morning Live at CTV British Columbia, and included remarks from Township of Langley Mayor Jack Froese, British Columbia Deputy Premier Rich Coleman, and Langley MP Mark Warawa.

Each Regional team was joined by celebrity supporters from the sport world and sponsors of Special Olympics BC, including:

- Vancouver Whitecaps captain Jay DeMerit and legend Carl Valentine;
- Vancouver Canucks alumni Trevor Linden and Darcy Rota;
- Travis Lulay, Marco Iannuzzi, and Wally Buono of the B.C. Lions;
- Olympic gold medallist Ashleigh McIvor;
- Olympic basketball coach Allison McNeill;
- Olympic speed skating medallist and 2014 Special Olympics Canada Summer Games Chair Cathy Priestner Allinger;
- and representatives of some of the generous sponsors of the Games and SOBC including the Canadian Progress Club, the City of Langley, Goldcorp, the Government of Canada, the New Car Dealers Association of B.C., Safeway, School District 35, Silver Wheaton, and Staples Canada.

The event also included the inspiring sight of the Law Enforcement Torch Run Final Leg bearing in the torch to light the Games flame and salute the spirit of the athletes and coaches. A delegation of Chiefs of Police and Officers in Charge formed an inspiring honour guard for the torch as the Final Leg runners carried it with pride into the Opening Ceremonies, providing a powerful demonstration of the long-standing relationship of respect and support between law enforcement and Special Olympics.

About Special Olympics BC

Special Olympics BC is dedicated to providing individuals with intellectual disabilities opportunities to enrich their lives and celebrate personal achievement through positive sport experiences. In 55 communities around the province, we provide year-round training and competitive opportunities in 18 different sports to more than 4,100 athletes of all ages and abilities, thanks to the dedicated efforts of over 3,200 volunteers. For more information, please visit www.specialolympics.bc.ca. Find us on Facebook and Twitter: www.facebook.com/specialolympicsbc | @sobcsociety.