

SPORTLIGHT

Summer 2025



Special Olympics

Michigan

Area 30

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Editor: Mary Adams

AREA DIRECTOR CORNER LISA SCHWAGER

Hello Everyone! I hope everyone has enjoyed their summer.

Soccer, Golf, and Cycling wrapped up with the State Games, which were held on September 26.27 in Canton. All of our teams had a successful season! We are very proud of all of our athletes for the great job they have done!!

Flag Football started in September. Swimming will start on Wednesday, November 5. And Winter Sports are just around the corner!

We will be having an Open Gym Night for females and males on Monday, December 1 at Northeast Middle School from 6-8 pm. Anyone interested in playing basketball is welcome to join us.

Please check our 2025 Sports Calendar for other upcoming events and dates.

A special thanks to John Muisenga, Ann Gach, and Mary Adams for their continued support and assistance.

Also, a special THANK YOU to all of our coaches and volunteers for their time and effort in working with our athletes. You are all greatly appreciated! We couldn't do it without everyone working together!

Note: we currently are in need of coaches for the following sports: Basketball, Soccer, and Flag Football. If you are interested in coaching, please let me know. We have a wonderful program with amazing volunteers and coaches, and we sincerely appreciate your support in ensuring our program remains one of the best in Michigan! Any questions, contact me either via phone (989-329-0850) or email: area30@somi.org.

AMANDA BROWN POETRY

Amanda is a Special Olympics athlete who is multi-talented. Besides participating in sports, she is also an accomplished photographer and poet. We are proud to publish Amanda's beautiful poetry and hope you enjoy future poetry from Amanda.

SELF-REFLECTION

By: Amanda Brown

May you grow and fly
You are getting smarter
You are becoming more
Empathetic even when

You get tested on it
It's hard sometimes to
Know but in your heart
You know it feels right.

You are more confident
A lot more than before
In the mirror what you
See is different now

You stand up for yourself
You may be a little uncomfortable
For what comes out and
Pay for it, you did it!

CHECK US OUT ON FACEBOOK!!

Have you "LIKED" us on Facebook? We post several times/week. Check out all the latest happenings on our Facebook page:
www.Facebook.com/Midland.Area30

Mary Adams is our administrator. Feel free to contact her if you would like something added to the page.

- Mary Adams—a30so@icloud.com

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989-329-0850
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John Muisenga, Assistant Area Director
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jamuisenga@charter.net

SOFTBALL TEAM NEWS

Ducks Team

by: Dan Brown, Coach

The Ducks (formerly the Sky Pirates) had a great year. It was great to see the excitement the players brought to each practice and game. The team had a lot of fun and, at the same time, showed improvement! We ended the season by attending the State Games where all the hard work paid off with a Silver Medal!

Congratulations on a great season to: *Konrad Anders, Jameson Baker, Lincoln Barringer, Mike Biby, Amanda Brown, Kevin Davis, Jeffrey Finney, Laura Lamberton, Laura Lorenzo, Kevin Moe, Austin Shaver, and Josh Shouse.* The Ducks are coached by Dan Brown and Duane Moe, with the assistance of Randy MacDonald and Kurt Silvis. Thanks to Brian Lamberton for his umpiring services this year. Many thanks to all the families, friends, and fans who supported and cheered on

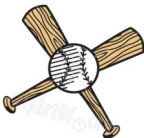
SOFTBALL TEAM NEWS

Mustangs Team

by: Lisa Schwager, Coach

The Mustangs softball team had another great season! All the athletes did a great job, and they continually improved their skills. We went to Canton for State Games and brought home the Bronze Medal! A special thank you to all my coaches and volunteers for their assistance with the team. You are all greatly appreciated!

Team members are: *Jordan Altenburg, Tanner Bowerson, James Brisboy, Kyle Eaton, Elizabeth Gisse, Jordan Harvey, Joe Kaczynski, Jacob Schwager, Brad Sheets, Casey Tomes, Austin Upton, and Miyami Yokomizo.* Coaches: *Lisa Schwager, Tracey Tatum, Dan and Kim Eaton.* Thank you all for your support!



SOFTBALL SKILLS TOURNAMENT

by: Sue Crane, Coach

It was another great year for the Skills Team! I want to recognize and thank all of our volunteers: Erica Roy, Joann Roy, Steve Roy, and all the other aides and family that stayed during practice to help when needed and to encourage the athletes.

The annual Midland Special Olympics Skills Softball tournament was held on Tuesday, August 19 @ the Midland Miracle Field. A special thanks to the Midland Parks & Rec for letting us use the Miracle Field for our practices and tournament.

The athletes brought home the following medals:

- Jennifer Banaszak, Silver
- Angela Blank, Silver
- Jacob Crane, Bronze
- Jaydenlee Davis, Silver
- Colleen Dolan, Bronze
- Dominique Mentel, Gold
- Carter Roy-Davis, Gold
- MiKayla Schultz, Gold
- Justine Wenzel, Silver



CONGRATULATIONS ATHLETES! Once again, you all really worked hard and encouraged each other—that is what it is all about. You all lived up to the Special Olympics oath!

Special thanks to our volunteers that worked at the tournament: *Erica Roy, Joann & Steve Roy, Deb Schultz, Mary Adams, Ann & Sara Gach, Tim Crane, and Gregg & Katie Hubner.* We could not do it without everyone!

We had a great season. We had some hot evenings but a lot of fun! What a great way to spend Tuesday evenings during the summer!

CYCLING PROGRAM

by: John Muisenga/Jerry Kaczynski, Co-Coaches

The Cycling team started practices in July. Practices were held on the Rail Trail with athletes completing the round trip to Sanford Park. New cyclists to the team this year were Michelle Trombley, Laura Lorenzo, Avalon Burgess, and JT Muisenga.

Thanks for the excellent support and encouragement from our group of volunteers/chaperones: *Ruth Muisenga, Lynne/Charlie DiMercurio, Kay Harley, Deb Lamberton, and Veronica Lorenzo.* Also, *Jeff Adamcik* (former Cycling coach) helped fix a few bikes and also participated in practices.

The Cycling Team completed their season on Saturday, September 27 at the Chelsea Proving Grounds in Chelsea. It was a very warm, sunny day. Congratulations!!
(RR = Road Race) (TT = Time Trial)

Josh DiMercurio (1st place 10K RR / 2nd place 5K RR)
Elizabeth Gisse (2nd place 10K RR / 1st place 5K RR)
Laura Lamberton (5th place 1K TT / 4th place 3K TT)
Laura Lorenzo (4th place 1K TT / 1st place 3K TT)
JT & John Muisenga —our unified team
(2nd place 10K Unified RR / 1st place 5K Unified TT)
Michelle Trombley (1st place 1K TT / 1st place 3K TT)
Andy Tudethout (2nd place 10K RR / 5th Place 5K RR)

UNIFIED GOLF SEASON

by: Jon Thiel/John Muisenga, Co-Coaches

The Area 30 Golf Team wrapped up their season at the Fall Games on Friday, September 26 @ the Eagle Crest Golf Course in Ypsilanti. Our unified golf teams played well on a beautiful fall day in Michigan! Some of the teams played the back nine for the first time.

We had 7 Unified Teams compete. Following are the places they took @ the tournament. CONGRATULATIONS!

- JT Muisenga / John Muisenga — 2nd place
- Silas Pitt / Russell Pitt — 2nd place
- Kendall Thiel / Jon Thiel — 4th place
- Kristian Davis/Jeff Butkiewicz—4th place
- Adam White / Greg Corrion — 1st place
- Andy Young / Gregg Young — 2nd place
- Dustin Sutton / LeRoy Owen — 1st place

Many thanks to Jon Thiel/John Muisenga for coordinating and organizing this season. Jon and his family are moving to the Ludington Area. Many thanks to Jon and his family for their support to Area 30 over the years!! We hope to see them at the Fall Games in the future! John Muisenga will be coaching next year and is looking for an assistant. Please contact him if you are interested: jamuisenga@charter.net.



STATE SUMMER GAMES

We sent a delegation of 54 athletes/coaches/volunteers to the State Summer Games @ CMU from May 29-31. Overall, we brought home many medals and ribbons, along with great memories from the SOMI State Summer Games 2025! CONGRATULATIONS ATHLETES!!

A special thank you to Lisa Schwager, Area Director; John Muisenga, Head Swim Coach and Assistant Area Director; Ann Gach, Head Track Coach; and Gregg Young, Head Bocce Coach for providing the organization and coordination of these games. Thanks also to our amazing volunteers and parents that supported our wonderful athletes!



FLAG FOOTBALL

by: Lisa Schwager, Coach

Flag Football started Thursday, September 18 and will go thru November 7. Athletes participating include: *Jordan Altenburg, Jameson Baker, Tanner Bowerson, James Brisboy, Jordan Harvey, Joe Kaczynski, Silas Pitt, Jack Richardson, Jacob Schwager, Brad Sheets, Josh Shouse, Casey Tomes, Angelo Vela, and Andy Young.* Coaches are *Lisa Schwager, Tracey Tatum, and Gregg Young.* Volunteers are *Jerry & Mary Kaczynski and Randy McDonald.*

We are so excited that our Flag Football team has been selected to represent Michigan at the 2026 National Games in Minneapolis on June 19-27!! Congratulations athletes and coaches on this remarkable achievement!!



SWIMMING PRACTICES

by: John Muisenga/Vince Mathews, Co-Coaches

Swim season will kick off at Northeast Pool starting Wednesday, November 5 @ 7 pm. Practices will be held on Wednesday evenings up until the 2026 State Summer Games in Mt. Pleasant. We will not have practice if school is cancelled or during the holidays. Mark your calendar for our annual Regional Swim Meet, which will be held @ Dow High School on Saturday, March 14, 2026. We also plan to participate in the Bay City and Ogemaw swim meets in the Spring. If you have questions about swimming or want to volunteer, contact John @ 859-1595 or jamuisenga@charter.net. Looking forward to another great swim season!

SOCCER TEAM RESULTS

by: Lisa Schwager, Coach

The Road Runners had a great season. We attended the State Fall Games in Canton on Saturday, September 27 and brought home the Gold Medal in Division #1!! Congratulations to the following athletes: *Tanner Bowerson, James Brisboy, Eric Kuch, Laura Lorenzo, Silas Pitt, Jack Richardson, Jess Rine, Jacob Schwager, and Brad Sheets.* Also, a special thank you to coach Tracey Tatum. Congratulations athletes on a great season!!



FUNDRAISING NEWS!

SPONSOR-A-CHAMP (SAC) PROGRAM

by: **John Muisenga**

Thank you to the following sponsors who sponsored 31 athletes @ the 2025 State Summer Games. We raised \$3,575!! The athletes heartfelt smiles say what words cannot — THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!!

- All Seasons Heating & Cooling
- Catherine & Peter Anders
- Bailey Family Dental & Braces
- Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church
- D&R Floor Covering
- Fraternal Order of Eagles, Midland #2110
- Janice Glomski
- Terry & Linda Graf
- Kay Harley
- Memorial Presbyterian Church
- Midland City Education Association
- John & Ruth Muisenga
- Deb & Mike Plaver
- Servinski Sod Service
- Deb Schultz
- Tommy's Express Car Wash



Letters are sent out every April to various businesses and individuals throughout our community asking them to sponsor our athletes for State Summer Games. Note—this is the only mailing program we do. The cost to sponsor an athlete is \$115. If you would like to support our SAC program, please email John Muisenga @ jamuisenga@charter.net. Any support is appreciated!

Thank you to all our great supporters across the Midland community!

AREA 30 WALK-A-THON

by: **Sue Crane, Coordinator**

We hosted our annual Walk-A-Thon on Saturday, May 17 right before our Area Summer Games. This year, we had 18 walkers that raised funds, and several other walkers that came to support them. Many of the participants stayed to cheer on the Area Summer Game athletes following the walk.

Congratulations to Bruce Fahlgren who raised the most with \$280 in donations! In total, the walkers raised \$1,715!! We are blessed to have such a supportive group of athletes, volunteers, families, and friends. Special thanks to Sue Crane, Deb Schultz, and Mary Adams for assisting with registration, the coaches for promoting it to their athletes, John Muisenga/ Mary Adams for helping to get the word out, Lisa Schwager for doing all the thank-you notes, and to Ann Gach for doing her amazing job with the financial end. It definitely takes a Village, and we are lucky to have such an amazing group. Consider joining us next year. It is a fun day!!

WALK-A-THON



WHEELHOUSE/AREA 30 GOLF OUTING

by: **John Muisenga**

Our annual Golf Outing was held on Sunday, August 3 @ Sandy Ridge Golf Course. Over 130 golfers were there to support Area 30 Special Olympics! Everyone enjoyed the beautiful day for golf and continued to support Area 30 Special Olympics with the Live Auction held after golfing.

Special thanks to TJ Flynn and Steve Calkins for being the MC's for the Live Auction. Chris Noel was there to provide his valuable council/guidance for the Golf Outing. Thank you Chris!! Arlene Bernard donated another beautiful patterned quilt for the auction. Another quilt and personal handbags were quilted by Elaine/Miyami Yokomizo. Thanks for all the creative work from our Area 30 supporters! The DiMercurio's donated the breakfast treats for the hungry golfers.

Many thanks to Dawn Rytlewski and the Wheelhouse Bar and Grill folks for organizing the event again this year. This year's outing raised \$15,000!! The Wheelhouse will present the check to Area 30 in October. Over the past 6 years, the Wheelhouse has helped raised over \$52,000!! THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT!! Sadly, the Wheelhouse will no longer be the organizer of the Golf Outing. Area 30 will again take over the planning and coordination of the outing. Mark your calendar for next year's outing on August 2, 2026.

Finally, thanks to the many volunteers from the Area 30 Family for helping with registration, mulligans, skins, 50/50 raffle, and live auction. They included: Mary Adams, Arlene Bernard, Lynne/Charlie DiMercurio, Ann Gach, Elizabeth Gisse, Joe Kaczynski, Peski Kennett, Ruth Muisenga, Deb Schultz, Lisa Schwager, Dave Stickles, Jody Willey, and Jim/Elaine/ Miyami Yokomizo. You're the best!!



FLAME OF HOPE TORCH RUN (LETR)

by: **John Muisenga**

The Law Enforcement Torch Run was held on Thursday, September 11 @ the Midland Miracle Field. The Flame of Hope/LETR Torch Run is the single largest fundraising effort for Special Olympics. The two main goals of the Torch Run are to raise funds and create awareness for the athletes who participate in Special Olympics.



This year, we had over 100+ people participate in the run/walk, including the Dow High cross-country team. Area 30 was well represented with a few of our athletes (Jameson Baker, Josh DiMercurio, Elizabeth Gisse, Joe Kaczynski, Laura Lorenzo),

parents, volunteers, and coaches participating in this event. Monies raised in the Great Lakes Bay Region are distributed across the areas of Midland, Bay City, and Saginaw.



Area 30

is

Seeking

- New Athletes
- Coaches
- Volunteers



JOIN SPECIAL OLYMPICS- MIDLAND !
FOR MORE INFORMATION
VISIT: [HTTPS://WWW.SOMI.ORG/AREA30](https://www.somi.org/area30)
OR
CONTACT LAUREN SAJ
EMAIL: LAURENSAJ@DELTA.EDU



SOMI-FIT

By: Deb Lamberton, Coordinator

Just a reminder ... be sure to sign up for our Health and Wellness SOMI Fit class this winter. This past winter, we had so much fun and were able to listen to many speakers. We learned all about healthy foods, making good choices, making good habits, and how to exercise. More news to come ...

If you are a Special Olympic athlete, we would love to have you join us. Contact Deb @ dlamberton333@yahoo.com for more information.



We currently are in need of coaches for the following sports: Basketball, Soccer, and Flag Football. If you have coaching experience—or just the passion to make a difference—please contact Lisa Schwager for more information either via phone (989-329-0850) or email: area30@som.org.

YOUNG ATHLETES PROGRAM

by: Lori Wright, Coordinator

Do you know a cognitive impaired child aged 2-7 years old that loves to play—running, jumping, throwing, pretend play—if so, this is a free program for them!

SOMI YAP (Special Olympics Michigan Young Athletes Program) is for Cognitive Challenged kids. So many of these kids enjoy going to their siblings sports games but secretly wish they could play. This program is for them!

Practices are held at Blessed Sacrament in the gym from 6-7 PM. Following are our practice dates: September 16.30 and October 14.28.

If you get a chance, come out and watch these wonderful young athletes as they are our future!

If you are interested in this program for your child, contact Lori @ lorisuewright@gmail.com.



CORTEVA INCLUSION DAY

by: Lisa Schwager

On Sunday, July 13, we attended the Corteva Inclusion Day at the Loons Stadium. We set up a table during the game and passed out information. The purpose of the Corteva Inclusion Day is to bring together every demographic possible and celebrate *Inclusion, Diversity and Equity* within our community. Athletes attending included: *Tanner Bowerson, Elizabeth Gisse, Joe Kaczynski, JT Muisenga, Jacob Schwager, Brad Sheets, and Casey Tomes. Also volunteers: Kim Eaton, Jerry/Mary Kaczynski, John Muisenga, and Lisa Schwager.*



THANK YOU!!

A special THANK YOU to the following people and organizations for their generous contributions:

- *ABVM Catholic Church (rummage sale proceeds)*
- *Catherine & Peter Anders*
- *Sue & Tim Crane*
- *Joseph & Patricia Downey Family Donor Advised Fund*
- *Knights of Columbus (Blessed Sacrament) #13452*
- *Knights of Columbus (ABVM) #2141*
- *Knights of Columbus (Sanford) #8043*
- *Kroger*
- *Deb Lamberton (softball hats/uniforms)*
- *Bernadine LeBeau*
- *Reimink Giving Fund*
- *Gene & Lucy Schoener*
- *United Way*
- *Wheelhouse Restaurant*

We have had some successful fundraisers this Spring and Summer, and we thank all the volunteers/athletes who assisted with these:

- *Walk-A-Thon Fundraiser (May 17)*
- *Wheelhouse Golf Outing Fundraiser (August 3)*
- *LETR Torch Run (September 11)*

Many thanks to Knights of Columbus Councils #13452 Blessed Sacrament and #8043 Sanford for donating ~\$3,500 from their Annual Tootsie Roll Drive proceeds to AREA 30!

At our HOF Banquet on August 20, we received a check from Mark Larsen of the Blessed Sacrament KofC Council. Earlier this year, we received a donation from ABVM KofC Council #2141.

We are blessed to have the support of the local KofC Councils. Thank you for your continued support!



THANK YOU!!

WALK-A-THON



A special THANK YOU for the following people who contributed to our annual Walk-A-Thon fundraiser:

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| • Jeff Adamcik | Jerry/Mary Kaczynski |
| • Mary Adams | Joe Kaczynski |
| • Eva Allen | Julia Kaczynski |
| • Deb/Janet Atkinson | Nancy/Gary Lang |
| • Ray Barta | Claudia Marr |
| • Arlene Bernard | Dominique Mentel |
| • Jim Bernard | Paul/Lauren Moeller |
| • Angela Blank | Mary Montney |
| • Amber Bovee | John/Ruth Muisenga |
| • Tina Brownell | JT Muisenga |
| • Tonya Bevins | Jack/Phyllis Muisenga |
| • Laurel Bucci | Bonnie Murray |
| • Breana Chapin | Sarah Nestle |
| • Jacob Crane | Becky Pequinot |
| • Sue/Tim Crane | Courtney Powell |
| • Kevin Davis | Mark Reed |
| • Bruce Fahlgren | Dorothy Richards |
| • Wendy Franz | Dorothy Richards |
| • Corrine Gann | Jack Richards |
| • Manny Garcia | Brian/Dorothy Richardson |
| • Ray Garcia | Jack Richardson |
| • Staci Garcia | Deb Schultz |
| • Shirley Gay | Autumn Scott |
| • Craig Hall | Brenda Sohasky |
| • Debbie Hayes | Dave Stickles |
| • Frank How | Anne Swiercz |
| • John Howley | Deb Van Tol |
| • Kay Harley | Lori/Kirk Wright |
| • John Havel | Mary Wheeler |
| • Sue Hoon | Jim/Elaine Yokomizo |
| • Jessica Jones | Miyami Yokomizo |

SPECIAL OLYMPICS MICHIGAN (SOMI) NEW IMPROVED WEBSITE

Check out the SOMI website. It is very easy and user friendly. To view our area webpage, follow these steps:

1. Log into the website —> www.somi.org
2. Click on: "Find Your Local Area" on top of the page
3. Select "Mid -Michigan Region", then "Area 30"

This page is specific to our area and has many forms you can access. Our sports and contact information is listed. We also have a link to our area Facebook page. This webpage is updated continuously. Feel free to share this with your family, friends, co-workers, etc.

Any questions, contact Mary Adams — a30so@icloud.com



Birthdays

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY To Our
Special Athletes and Volunteers!**

June

Konrad Anders
Anna Barnes
Jan Barto
Kevin Davis
Maureen Drake
Luke Drumright
Mike Frohm
Kenny Letts
Josh McPherson

July

Lucas Combs
JJ Grimm
Joe Kaczynski
Brian Lamberton
Christina Oliver
Anna Ruter
Heather Wellman
Ricky West
Andy Young

August

Mike Biby
Aiyon Cao
Colleen Dolan
Jeff Dyer
Dan Eaton
Rex Fritz
Dean Glomski
Jerry Kaczynski
Jeremy Mathews
Mishell Mathews
JT Muisenga
John Muisenga
Julie Noel
Matt Noel
Gary Rozinski
Deb Schultz
Brad Sheets
Tracey Tatum
Casey Tomes
Austin Upton
Adam White
Miyami Yokomizo

September

Jessica Day
Cutler Doud
Sarah Geisert
Christina Graf
Craig Hall
Lyle Hanson
Paul Kalitta
Jeffrey Mathews
Chris Noel
Kathy Peariso
Austin Shaver
Justin Smith
Kirk Wright
Gregg Young

**HAPPY
BIRTHDAY**

"BOWLING BUDDIES" BOWLING LEAGUE

by: Erica Roy, Coordinator

Bowling Buddies started in early August. We have had a great turnout thus far with several new bowlers. We have made some changes this year, but they are good changes and will keep the league alive and well! We look forward to having a very successful league this year as we are fortunate to have a much longer season this year. Please understand, however, that our dates are subject to change at any time.

Note: if a person misses for any reason, they will be charged \$4, which is due at the next practice—no exceptions! This money is applied towards the banquet and awards cost.

Please mark your calendar with these dates:

Dates: August 2.16
September 13.27
October 11.25
November 8.27
December 6.20
January 3.17.31
February 14.28
March 14.28 (Banquet is March 28)



Time: 12:30-2:30 pm
(check in @ 12:00, bowling starts at 12:30)

Location: Northern Lanes

Cost: \$10/week
(includes two games plus bowling shoes)

Who: Anyone!! Can be athletes, volunteers, unified partners; it's open to all!

If you have any questions, contact either:

- Erica Roy @ 989-418-9859
- Joann Roy @ 989-513-4436

AREA 30 WELCOMES NEW ATHLETES!

Welcome to the following athletes
who have joined our program:

*Adaya Arnold
Aryana Arnold
Avalon Burgess
Aiyon Cao
Cutler Doud
Rex Fritz
Michelle Trombley*



SPOTLIGHT

OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR DUANE MOE

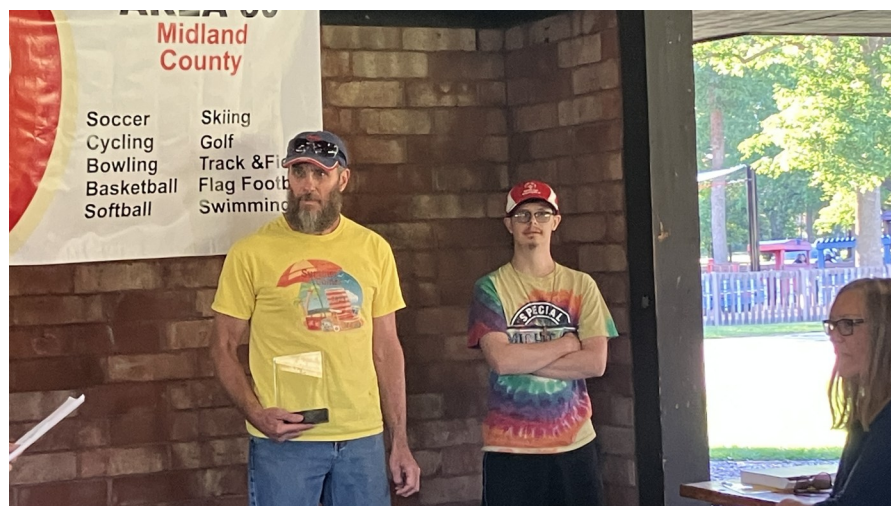
Duane Moe has been named the 2025 Outstanding Volunteer for Area 30 Special Olympics. He has volunteered his time and talents for 16 years to our program. Duane readily volunteers as a coach, chaperone, and fundraiser. He currently serves as a co-coach for our Sky Pirates Softball team. Duane assisted with the Mud Dogs and Celtics basketball teams for a few years before Covid. He would help them with various skills and techniques. Duane also volunteers for our track program; he helps with softball, shotput, javelin, standing long jump, and running/walking. Duane's efforts have had a positive impact on our training program and on the athletes he coaches.

A volunteer is one who is caring, patient, enthusiastic, committed, and respected. Duane exudes these qualities! He is an easy-going individual who brings out the best in everyone. Duane does it all without looking for public acknowledgement. He enjoys meeting new people and working with people of different functioning abilities. Duane derives personal satisfaction knowing that he has helped someone obtain their goal. As Duane lives in Sanford, we have a couple athletes who Duane would transport to practices.

In addition to coaching, Duane also assists with our various fundraisers. For our annual Spaghetti Dinner, he was assigned to the kitchen area, assisting with food preparation, dishwashing duties, a server/waiter, and whatever else was needed. Duane also volunteered at our Tag Day Fundraiser with his son Kevin; Kevin would wear his Special Olympics medals, and they would bring in the most money during their shift! Also, they would volunteer to work more than one shift if needed. And they always had a big smile on their face as they greeted the people!! Duane also assisted with our Bowl-A-Thon fundraiser and assisted the coordinator. He also volunteered at our annual Soup-n-Salad fundraiser. Duane is a person to count on when help is needed for any fundraisers!

Special Olympics is a family affair. Duane became involved in our program through his son, Kevin, who is a Special Olympics athlete since 2009. Duane's wife – Jane - has participated in our program when she is available. They would assist with fundraisers, provide cheerleading support for our teams, and lend support in whatever capacity they can.

Duane's outstanding contributions of time, dedication, and encouragement have enriched our program. Duane is a mentor and a friend to the athletes and volunteers in our program. For all of his unique abilities and talents, we are proud to nominate Duane as the 2025 Outstanding Volunteer for Area 30. He truly exemplifies the qualities of a "special" volunteer! Congratulations Duane!!



SPOTLIGHT

OUTSTANDING COACH OF THE YEAR SARA GACH

A good coach possesses a combination of essential qualities. A coach should clearly convey instructions, provide constructive feedback, and listen to their athletes. A coach should inspire and motivate athletes to achieve their goals. A good coach respects the individuality and potential of each athlete they work with. A coach also needs to understand and respond to the emotions and needs of others. A coach is patient and persistent in their efforts, recognizing that progress may take time. These qualities of communication, motivation, empathy, respect, and patience are exhibited by our Outstanding Coach – Sara Gach!

Sara has been actively involved in Special Olympics for the past 15 years; she was 12 years old when she started volunteering! Sara is a certified track coach. She served as the head track coach in 2024. Sara was instrumental in organizing and coordinating the track practices. She brought the track delegation to the A31, A9, and A30 meets. She delegates responsibilities to the other track coaches; her specialty is coaching standing long jump and softball. Sara also serves as a timer and recorder. At the end of the track season, Sara talks with the athletes to see what events they like/dislike and plans accordingly for the following year. Sara has earned the respect of the athletes and coaches.

Sara has also worked at our Regional Basketball Skills Tournament. She also served as a side-line referee at soccer games and a basketball scorekeeper. She has volunteered for various fundraisers including: Haunted Forest, Spaghetti Dinner, Tag Day, and our Golf Outing.

Sara does it all without looking for public acknowledgement. She is truly a behind-the-scenes worker. Sara has no fear of meeting new people, working with people of different functioning abilities, or taking on any task.

Sara became involved with Special Olympics through her mother Ann Gach. Since Special Olympics has always been a part of her life, Sara has been passionate about our athletes and our program. She looks forward to the beginning of our track season with enthusiasm and excitement!

We are proud to have Sara Gach represent Area 30 as the 2025 Coach of the Year! Her hard work and dedication make a difference to the athletes and our program!



SPOTLIGHT

AREA 30 LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD ARLENE & BOB BERNARD

Arlene and Bob Bernard have been involved as volunteers in Special Olympics Midland since 1973 when our program was established. They have a son Jim who is a Special Olympics athlete. They have dedicated over 50 years of their lives to Special Olympics! Arlene and Bob have been critical, vital, and instrumental members of our program since its infancy. Bob passed away in 2021 and we have lost part of a valuable team, but we are so thankful to still have Arlene volunteering with our program!

Arlene has volunteered her time and talents to Special Olympics without asking for any special awards or recognition, and she possesses a natural affinity for selfless volunteerism. Through her unselfish efforts, Arlene brought a greater awareness of Special Olympics home to the community. As a behind-the-scenes worker, she does it all without looking for public acknowledgement—just the personal satisfaction that she has helped our program. Arlene is also a compassionate friend who gives outstanding contributions of time, dedication, and encouragement that enrich the program and the lives of the athletes. Arlene is an upbeat, easy-going individual who brings out the best in everyone.

Arlene has served in many capacities, not only in our program but in other programs for intellectually disabled individuals. Her talents were used in coordinating the first annual prom for the handicapped in Midland in 1989. She acquired prom dresses/suits by contacting local stores for donations and altering the formal attire as necessary.

Arlene has performed many volunteer functions over the years, which included chaperone, chauffeur, fundraiser, ribbon writer, seamstress, baker, social chairman, creative designer, local liaison, and member of our Area Management Team.

Our program relied on Arlene's expertise and seamstress abilities when uniforms need to be mended, when banners need to be fashioned, and when aprons (e.g. for fundraisers) need to be designed. Every year at our golf outing, Arlene designs and creates a quilt which is auctioned at the Live Auction. This has always been one of our top-selling items! In addition, she works at the golf outing collecting money for the Live Auction.

Arlene has gone the extra mile in talking with the intellectually disabled regarding their life skills (e.g. how to tie shoes, how to count money, how to buy clothes, how to "act" with and "respect" other people and their possessions, etc.)

Bob served as a coach, chaperone, chauffeur, AMT Member, and fundraiser. The sports he coached included: Athletics, Basketball, Soccer, Softball, Walking, Swimming/Diving, Bowling, Alpine Skiing, Snow Shoeing, Cross Country Skiing, and Speed Skating. He was a certified coach in all these sports, plus certified as a Games Director and in Principles of Coaching. Bob attended the 2006 USA National Games in Ames, IA as one of our softball coaches. Our team brought home the national championship in their division!!

Bob was involved at the State Level for many years. From 1982-85, he served on the SOMI State Softball Committee when the State Softball Tournament was held in Midland. He also served as a SOMI screener for the sports of basketball, soccer, and softball. He trained our athlete, Don Krajewicz (the first SOMI athlete) on becoming a certified umpire for softball. Bob worked diligently with Andrea Ferrerio (formerly the Training Director for SOMI) in ensuring that Don was properly trained and instructed on the fundamentals of umpiring softball. Bob, himself, was an ASA Certified Umpire. Bob—on many occasions—took some of our athletes camping, hunting, and fishing. He also went on bus trips with the athletes to Toronto, Nashville, and Cedar Point. Though he was retired, instead of taking it "easy", he enthusiastically and selflessly invested his time in helping the athletes realize their potential. Bob was a role model, mentor, friend, and supporter to the athletes and volunteers of Special Olympics. He made many lifelong and dear friends in Special Olympics.

Bob and Arlene went the extra step in helping their son, Jim, gain independence. Although this was a difficult change in their family status, they took it all in stride as an exciting, positive move for the best future Jim could have. Jim has been independent for 25+ years!

Bob and Arlene have won many awards with Special Olympics:

- 1987 A30 Outstanding Coach – Bob
- 1993 SOMI Outstanding Coach of the Year – Bob
- 1994 A30 Outstanding Volunteer – Arlene
- 1995 A30 Family Hall of Fame (family inducted into HOF)
- 1997 A30 Outstanding Volunteer – Bob
- 2000 SOMI Spirit Award – Bob (first recipient of this prestigious award!)
- 2017 Rick Vandersloot Award – Jim



We are so proud to have Arlene and Bob Bernard selected as our second recipient of the Area 30 Lifetime Achievement Award!! We are deeply grateful as their selfless volunteer efforts have brought lasting value and kindheartedness to our program!!

"HALL OF FAME" INDUCTEE

We are proud to induct the 29th Family into our annual Area 30 Special Olympics "Family Hall of Fame". (We had to take a couple of years off due to Covid). This family has been actively involved with our program for the past 7 years. In the past 3 years, this person/family has been instrumental in bringing our Area 30 program back, kind of like a "resurrection". This recipient has devoted so much of their time and talent in ensuring the Area 30 program is viable for now and into the future.

The Recipient of this year's Families Hall of Fame is: **The Schwager Family**

Lisa Schwager has a son involved in our Area 30 program, Jacob. Jacob has been active in many sports since 2018. Jacob participates in Basketball, Track & Field, Softball, Soccer, and Flag Football. Over the past years, Jacob has grown to help and encourage his fellow athletes and always demonstrates great sportsmanship at our Regional and State Events. For the big events, Jacob helps Mom (Lisa) with all the gear and supplies.

Lisa has now served as our Area Director since November 2022. It is amazing to think back to how "tenuous" our Area 30 program had become back in 2022. Covid did not help the situation, but we were having difficulty getting our programs back up and running, along with coaches beginning to resign due to various issues.

John Muisenga called a special meeting in November 2022 to re-start and re-establish the organizational chart for Area 30. It is at this meeting, that Lisa heard the call and "responded" and took on the role as Area Director.

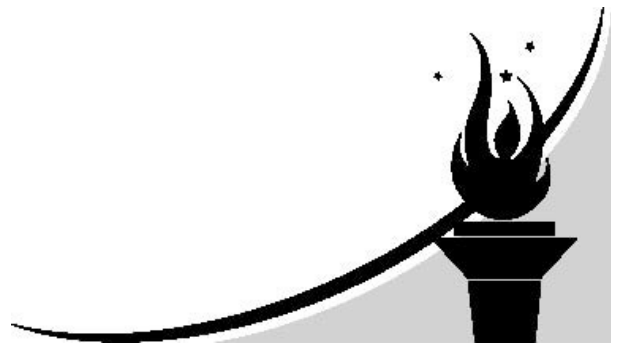
Since that time, Lisa has worked with past Area Directors, Area Management Team members, and Area 30 parents to ensure our Sports programs are back up and running properly. Working with John Muisenga (Assistant Area Director), we have made sure all of our athletes are properly registered now with the new Athlete Registration forms and Volunteers/Coaches/Chaperones are registered using the new "Voluntaro" system. I can attest to having many calls with Lisa to ensure our athletes registration is up-to-date and eligibility is retained to participate in SOMI Events! This is no small achievement these days.

Lisa coaches many of our sports programs. She is a head coach for our, now, 2026 National Games bound "Golden Knights" Flag Football Team. Lisa is also the head coach for our men's basketball team, the "Wolfpack". Lisa is also a head coach for our Softball and Soccer teams, the "Mustangs" and "Roadrunners", respectively. Lisa is always ready to help out at our regional events, such as the Area 30 Swim Meet and the Area 30 Track and Bocce Meet. Over the past years, Lisa has established contacts with the other Areas in Michigan, which helps schedule our Area 30 teams for their tournaments and special events during the year. Lisa makes sure our teams have all the equipment and uniforms needed to compete and look their best on the field.

For fundraising, Lisa has helped with the Wheelhouse/Area 30 Golf Outing over the past 4 years. This is our biggest fundraiser of the year, bringing in over \$75K, since 2000.

There are also many other "behind the scenes" things that Lisa does to support Area 30, as Area Director. I could be here a long time, so....Congratulations to the "Schwager" family (Lisa and Jacob) as the 2025 Family Hall of Fame recipients!





COME SHARE THE SPIRIT OF AREA 30 SPECIAL OLYMPICS

- ☐ Send information on enrolling athletes in Special Olympics
- ☐ Send information on volunteering for Special Olympics
- ☐ Send information on how I can involve my organization
- ☐ Accept the enclosed tax-deductible contribution

Name: _____

Address: _____

Mail to: Area 30 Special Olympics, 2808 Blairmont, Midland, MI 48642
or Contact: Lisa Schwager, Area Director (989)329-0850 / area30@somi.org