



## Goals for Global Messengers

It was a big day for the Global Messengers Class of 2015 on 17 February, when they convened at Special Olympics New Zealand's Lower Hutt headquarters to set their goals for the year ahead. The goal setting workshop, which was the first of four the Global Messengers will take part in this year, was run by Emma Holderness of The Training Practice, and Julia Sanson, Athlete Leadership Programme Manager for Special Olympics New Zealand.

"We have a fantastic group of athletes this year and it was great to see them all setting some very challenging, but at the same time very realistic goals for the year ahead," says Julia. "It was also an excellent opportunity for them to get to know the other Global Messengers and to learn more about their role and why it is so important."

The Global Messengers will next meet in May for their second workshop, which will focus on presentation skills.

*Fanletter* caught up with 2015 Global Messenger Stacey Parker to hear about her goals for the year.



**Check it out**



Special Olympics  
**WORLD GAMES**  
LOS ANGELES 2015

**Our team of athletes will be competing at the Special Olympics World Summer Games in LA in less than six months!**



**Find out about their preparation**

## From the CEO's desk

I was immensely privileged to attend an inspirational evening in Auckland on 28th February hosted by the Upper North Island Regional Council where we celebrated the long service of 37 special volunteers from six Special Olympics Clubs in the greater Auckland region.

These passionate volunteers, some of whom had completed more than 25 years of service, continue to lead from the heart to help our athletes in their sporting endeavours day in and day out. They are creative, imaginative and flexible people who have incredible energy and an ability to break a project down into small steps through infectious enthusiasm encouraging everyone to do a little part so that it adds up to a lot.

These positive individuals are humble, selfless and very sincere and often they do not expect any rewards or recognition. Their gratitude comes from making a difference to the lives of others. I am in awe of the humility that all our amazing volunteers show and I was so honoured to be able to celebrate the valuable contribution that our dedicated volunteers make to Special Olympics so willingly.

To all our volunteers around the country, thank you very much from the bottom of our hearts.

**Kathy Gibson, Chief Executive Officer** ■

## Special Olympics meets the West Coast

Special Olympics is now available to secondary school students on the West Coast of the South Island, with the launch of the West Coast schools programme last month.

"The development of the programme was really driven by demand from students locally," says Graeme Bain, Regional Sports Coordinator for Special Olympics New Zealand. "We started getting a lot of enquiries about Special Olympics in the West Coast area, which prompted us to look at what we could do to make our programmes available there."

The programme's first event was a swim meet at the Grey District Aquatic Centre in Greymouth on 4 March, where students competed against others from the area in freestyle, breaststroke and backstroke, as well as a team relay. Swim officials from local swim clubs were involved in the event and Year 13 students from local schools assisted with timing. ■



**Read more**

Watch out for more coverage of the programme's first event in next month's *Fanletter*.



## And the winners are....

A big congratulations to the winners of Special Olympics NZ's 2015 Distinguished Service and Life Membership Awards.

### Special Olympics New Zealand Distinguished Service Awards

Awarded to an individual, company or body corporate that has made a significant and/or on-going contribution to Special Olympics New Zealand or its clubs.

→ David Rutherford

→ George Tseung

### Special Olympics Life Membership Awards

A Life Member is a person who has given long and meritorious service to Special Olympics New Zealand and/or its Clubs.

→ Andrew Langford (Special Olympics Whangarei)

→ Heather Raudon (Special Olympics Manukau)

→ John Borkin (Special Olympics Tamaki)

→ Lorraine Gibbs (Special Olympics Canterbury)

Many of our Clubs have also presented service awards to their volunteers in recent months. ■



[Check out the recipients](#)

## Special Olympics Whangarei turns 30

Congratulations to Special Olympics Whangarei, who celebrated their 30th birthday with a cricket 'Have A Go' day on 15 February. Around 18 athletes, along with parents and caregivers took part in the 20/20 style event, held at Mair Park in Whangarei.



The cricket day was a nod to the start of the ICC Cricket World Cup, and also to the organisation's beginnings. Special Olympics Whangarei was launched following a successful 'Have A Go' Day in February 1985, involving about 100 athletes competing in indoor bowls and athletics from as far away as Kaitaia. An aquatics day was held the following week, with a similar response.

"Our first 'Have A Go' Days were so popular and we got such positive feedback that we knew we were onto something the community would support," says long-time Club volunteer Glynis Collins. "It was important to us that our 30-year celebration reflected our beginnings and gave our athletes the chance to have fun."

Thirty years on from its establishment, Special Olympics Whangarei now provides athletics, aquatics, indoor bowls, tenpin bowling, equestrian, soccer and powerlifting. The Club has about 70 athletes, as well as a satellite group in Dargaville. ■



[Read more](#)



Joce (left) with one of SONZ's founders, Wendy Quinn

## Remembering Jocelyn Sweney

We were saddened to hear of the passing of Special Olympics Coach, Past Club Captain of Special Olympics Auckland, and Special Olympics New Zealand Life Member Jocelyn (Joce) Sweney who passed away peacefully on 17 February, after bravely battling an illness for just over a year.

With a commitment to Special Olympics spanning more than 25 years, Jocelyn provided outstanding volunteer sports administration to Special Olympics New Zealand and pioneered

ways of promoting the organisation in new parts of the country.

In 1992, alongside Margaret Hallenberg, Jocelyn revitalised Special Olympics Auckland, and helped to build the Club into the strong and active Club it is today. Joce made an incredible difference in the lives of many young people with special needs and believed everyone should benefit from a wide social and sporting life, making new friends and having new experiences.

Thank you for your contribution Joce. Our thoughts are with your family and friends. ■



## Bocce bonanza!

Coaches and athletes alike were put to the test at a bocce event in Thames Valley on 21 February.

The day began with a coaching session conducted by Special Olympics New Zealand's Manager – Sports Operations, Mike Ryan. Seven coaches from the Thames Valley area looking to become more successful at coaching bocce took part, picking up valuable coaching skills and tips.

The coaches' new expertise was then put to the test in a round robin tournament involving 16 athletes from Special Olympics Thames Valley and Goldfields School.

"It was great to see the players further developing their bocce abilities, and also to watch the coaches applying skills and knowledge at the very successful coaches session," says Colleen Black, Regional Sports Coordinator for Special Olympics New Zealand. ■



Find out more about bocce

## Athlete Q&A:

### Stacey Parker



Fanletter caught up with 2015 Global Messenger Stacey Parker to hear about her goals for the year. Nineteen year-old Stacey joined Special Olympics Te Awamutu five years ago in 2010. Her favourite sport is swimming!

#### What are your thoughts on being part of the Athlete Leadership programme for 2015?

I'm really excited. It is a great experience and a new opportunity for me.

#### What goals have you set yourself for the year?

To get my 200m freestyle time under one minute and to get more confident at public speaking. In the long term I would like to train to become a swim coach and get paid for it!

#### What's the best thing about being a Special Olympics athlete?

Meeting new people and travelling. I really enjoy doing my swimming – training and competing. At the beginning of the year we work with our coach to set goals for our swimming and it's good to be able to work and train to try and achieve them.

#### Do you have a special trick for making training easier?

Not really, just work on your fitness.

#### What advice would you like to give other Special Olympics athletes?

Get involved and make the most of it! ■



## Basketball battle in Rotorua

Last month, teams from Special Olympics Rotorua and Special Olympics Waikato competed at the National Maori Basketball Tournament in Rotorua, which for the first time included a Special Olympics category!

Representing the Waikato Tainui iwi, Special Olympics Waikato won all four matches that formed the round robin tournament, but they were hard fought battles, with Special Olympics Rotorua (representing the local Te Arawa iwi), conceding only small margins.

"It was a really great event and we were excited to be invited to take part,"

says Stella McLeod, Sports Coordinator for Special Olympics Rotorua.

"As well as competing in the tournament, most of our team members were able to attend the prize giving and take part in Te Arawa's cultural item, and both Special Olympics teams were called up on stage to be congratulated together as the winner and runner-up. It was a really enjoyable experience and we hope more Special Olympics teams will take part next year."

For more photos and videos **check out Special Olympics Rotorua's Facebook page.** ■



## LA2015 news

### Basketball and bocce athletes benefit from Wellington sports camp

The Special Olympics New Zealand basketball and bocce athletes, competing at the Special Olympics World Summer Games 2015 in Los Angeles, gave all they had at the most recent specialised sports camps.

The camps were held in Wellington on 21 and 22 February to give athletes a chance to train in their sports in the lead up to the Games, held from 25 July to 2 August.

Basketball Coach Al Robson says the athletes put in five hours of solid training on both Saturday and Sunday, which included a mix of skills, fitness and teamwork drills.

“The players were pleased to be back together again and continue bonding. We also played against a local under 17 team with the New Zealand team coming from behind to win,” says Al, adding that time was also taken to allow the players to think about design of playing strips.

“While there is still work to do, particularly around team work and combinations, I know it will work out with the athletes spending more together time as a team.”

Following the basketball camp, each player was given a motivational diary to record details of diet, fitness and skill work on a daily basis. The diary also includes details of the Games.

Bocce Coach, Lyn Ryan, says the bocce camp also went well and “as a coach I gained real insight into the athletes’ personalities. This will enable me to work on strategies to allow them to experience the best outcome from the Games”.

Lyn says the camps allowed the athletes to play singles, which is not something they often get to do.

“We also got practice at divisioning, which is currently only done regularly at the Manawatu competition, and we played against a local team which kindly gave up their time on Saturday.”

“The athletes had a good time and learnt new things. Some of them have made a determined effort around health and fitness. They are adding extra exercise to their day and one athlete is seeing a nutritionist – all of these great efforts are getting results,” says Lyn.

Complementary to the sports camps, the LA2015 coaches are collaborating with local coaches to ensure each athlete is on track and programmes are adjusted, as necessary.

The next planned sports camps are in March and will be for equestrian, athletics, and ten pin bowling at different locations across New Zealand. ■



### ATHLETE PROFILE Christopher Reilly – tenpin bowling

Dunedin-based athlete Christopher Reilly has been involved with Special Olympics Otago for 13 years.

In that time he has played most of the sports on offer including basketball, indoor rowing, tenpin bowling, and football, and competed in Special Olympics and mainstream events.

For the past nine years tenpin bowling has taken precedence and since 2011 he has run his local tenpin bowling league.

His average bowling score is 152 but he has been known to knock out a score above 200.

“It is an honour to be going to Los Angeles and representing my chosen sport and representing my country,” he says.

Chris graduated from Special Olympics New Zealand’s Athlete Leadership Programme in 2011 and as one of our Global Messengers has been instrumental in organising events in Otago, including the National Summer Games 2013.

In addition to sport and Global Messenger commitments Chris is kept busy running after his five-year-old daughter and full-time work at the New Zealand Wood Moulding Company. ■