

# Special Olympics Georgia



**State Fall Games presented by**



Here come the athletes.

From Friday through Sunday, more than 2,000 athletes and their families will be in Dalton for the Special Olympics Georgia State Fall Games. The event is presented by The Rotary Club of Carpet City.

Competitions will be held all over Dalton, including downtown, Heritage Point Park and Nob North Golf Course. The public is invited and encouraged to attend to cheer on the many athletes involved. The opening ceremonies are Friday night at the trade center.

In this special three-page section, you'll find all the information you'll need to know about the events. You'll also meet some of the athletes competing in the games.



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT SPECIAL OLYMPICS

### WHAT DOES SPECIAL OLYMPICS GEORGIA (SOGA) DO?

SOGA provides year-round sports training and athletic competition in Olympics-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness and learn life-long skills. More than 500 games, meets and tournaments are held in communities throughout Georgia. Five statewide events are held annually.

### WHAT DO ATHLETES GET OUT OF COMPETING?

SOGA contributes to the physical, social and psychological development of people with intellectual disabilities. Through successful experiences in sports, the athletes gain confidence and build a positive self-image which carries over into the classroom, the home, the job and the community.

### WHO CAN BE AN ATHLETE?

People eight years old and up who are identified by an agency or

professional as having an intellectual disability are eligible to participate. There is no athlete limit.

### HOW LONG HAS SOGA BEEN AROUND?

For 43 years. In 1970, 500 athletes gathered at suburban Atlanta college to participate in the first-ever track and field event held under the Special Olympics Georgia banner. The organization has grown to help 25,878 children and adults participate in 25 sports. Special Olympics Incorporated was founded in 1968 by the late Eunice Kennedy Shriver.

### HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

If you want to volunteer with your local program, visit SOGA's Web site at [www.SpecialOlympicsGA.org](http://www.SpecialOlympicsGA.org) and click on "SOGA in Your Community," then find your county and area and call your regional manager. If you know a child or adult who may want to become an athlete, click on "Compete." If you want to compete with athletes as a Unified Partner, click on "Compete" and then "Unified Partner."

## WHERE CAN WE FIND THE ATHLETES?

**Northwest Georgia Trade and Convention Center**  
Opening ceremony/dance

**Heritage Point Park**  
Bocce, softball team, softball skills,  
long distance run/walk, Olympic Town

**Downtown Dalton**  
Cycling

**Nob North Golf Course**  
Golf and golf skills

# State Fall Games: ATHLETES

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## Yoshi MATSUDA

After performing several Christmas performances and the national anthem at a local Special Olympics competition, Yoshihiro "Yoshi" Matsuda will now perform at State Fall Games Opening Ceremony Friday at the trade center.

Yoshi, a 17-year-old student at Dalton High School, is brilliant in art, math and especially music.

He may struggle in the areas of social skills and communication since he has

Autism Spectrum Disorder, said his music therapist Laura Ogas.

"While one might not be able to maintain a two-way conversation with him, he is a true 'savant' in the area of music," she said.

Yoshi's mother and father are both outstanding musicians, and have exposed he and his brother Yuji to music their entire lives.

Once Yoshi has heard a piece of music, he has the ability to repeat it back on

piano. But it has to be a piece he is interested in.

"He will also place my hands on the keys he wants me to play when he wants to play a different song, Ogas said. "Yoshi is a music therapist's dream student to work with. He challenges me to be a better therapist and he teaches me something new every week."

Listen to Yoshi play the national anthem at Friday's opening ceremony at the trade center at 7:30 p.m.



## Tyler HUGHEY

On a Friday night, you might find Tyler Hughey of Dalton taking a break from practice or school activities to play card games with friends at The Battlegrounds Games and Movies at Walnut Square Mall in front of a handycam.

Tyler films their games and funny commentary on his self-named "baby giraffe," a small tripod with a touchscreen camera. He attributes the confidence to speak in front of others to the skills he's learned through Special Olympics.

"Special Olympics made me who I am now. I am very social and ultimately hilarious," he said.

It all started with having

to unexpectedly speak about himself at a meeting. Then he was trained as a Global Messenger and now talks to large civic and corporate groups about his experiences with Special Olympics.

More memories and stories to share will come as he competes this weekend in bocce at State Fall Games. His mom is the games volunteer and his dad is the bocce venue director.

Unscripted is not a problem. Tyler said he tells himself before any kind of speaking engagement, "I've done this one before, unscripted. So I've made up my mind and I'm going to

do this."

In the YouTube videos, he and his friends call out strategy and talk about themselves on YouTube.

Then he edits and posts the video Saturday. You can also see Tyler's commentary when he's playing games, adding his character analysis. His handle on YouTube is Megarexx1.

Before Megarexx1, Tyler made videos on how to make simple recipes like omelets and sloppy joes, then he went on to videoing his video gaming and even a few magic tricks.

"I've gotten the confidence to do all kinds of things," Tyler said.

## Laurie GRIGGERS

Laurie Griggers, 50, loves Special Olympics. And the program has been a constant in the many years of moving with her family as she and the family moved many times because of her father's job. At the State Fall Games Friday through Saturday, Laurie will compete in bocce at Heritage Point Park.

Her life in Special Olympics began in Tallahassee, Fla. in 1972, where she first participated in track and field events. Next was Tampa and adding bowling and basketball. Then Greenville, Miss. is where she learned floor hockey.

"Each time the family moved, there was Special Olympics to help fill the void of friends she had to leave behind, and to bring new friends to her," her current coach Rhonda Newell said. "She loved sports and being able to compete and be a real athlete."

Then family moved to



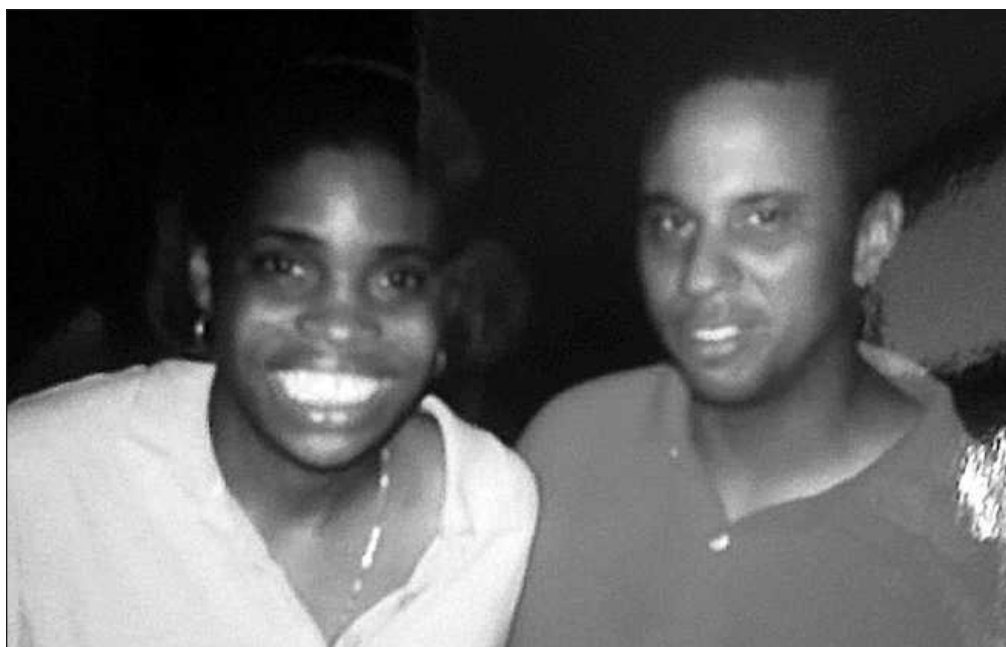
Wilmington, N.C. where in addition to bowling, golf was added. Then bocce was a new sport being added to the Special Olympics in 1994, and she loved that sport. She proudly displays 40 years of medals and ribbons in her room.

This was the last of the higher impact sports, as she

began having health problems.

Yet, she continues the sports which are low impact, back in Georgia.

Laurie said she does not want to move any more. It's too hard to leave friends, she says. Special Olympics has indeed been a very special "light in her life."



## Rudolpha and Michael BARRON

Married couple Rudolpha and Michael Barron are competing on the same four-person bocce team this year for the first time. Rudolpha's mother and another athlete's parent, Peggy Lee, are the other two team members on their unified bocce team at State Fall Games.

A unified team is made up of athletes with and without intellectual disabilities. The Gwinnett County bocce team will compete at the Special Olympics Georgia competition at Heritage Point Park. Nearly 1,200 athletes from around the state are expected to attend.

This weekend wraps up weeks of the married couple of six years practicing in

their large front yard. They live with Rudolpha's mother in the Decatur area.

After growing up on St. Thomas Island and competing in Special Olympics there, the program continued to be a big part of Rudolpha's life leading up to this weekend of playing bocce side by side with her husband. The two met 10 years ago at a Special Olympics practice where both were playing with Dekalb County. Rudolpha was playing bocce and Michael was playing softball. Rudolpha works at her mom's business and volunteers at Special Olympics Georgia state office and is also a public speaker, known as a Global Messenger. Michael took the weekend

off from work at Walmart specifically for competition and meeting up with old friends.

This is Rudolpha's sixth year playing bocce and Michael's first. Off and on throughout dinner, you might hear the two talking bocce strategy, which boils down to one object: score and win. Last year, she learned a valuable lesson in watching teammates playing: roll the ball to the center of the court. The bocce trio has been practicing that move quite a bit at home.

Rudolpha is team captain, based on her experience. He takes it well, she said. "I tell him to make sure to get it close to the palina so we can score and win!" Rudolpha says.

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**Special Olympics Georgia**



# State Fall Games

## GENERAL SCHEDULE

**Friday, Oct. 11**



11:30 a.m. - 6:30 p.m.: **Team softball**, Heritage Point Park; Unified (upper fields 3 and 4); Modified (lower fields 1, 4 and 5); Traditional (lower fields 2 and 3)  
 1 p.m. - 5 p.m.: **Bocce**, Heritage Point Park (upper fields 1 and 5)  
 3 p.m. - 5 p.m.: **Bicycle inspections**, Bear Creek Bicycle  
 7:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.: **Opening ceremony**, trade center

Heritage Point Park (upper fields 1 and 5)

8 a.m. - 11 p.m.: **Golf skills**, Nob North Golf Course  
 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.: **Long distance run/walk**, Heritage Point Park (lower fields track)



9 a.m. - 2 p.m.: **Cycling**, downtown Dalton  
 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.: **Olympic Town**, Heritage Point Park

10 a.m. - 4 p.m.: **Healthy Athletes** (fun fitness event) at Olympic Town, Heritage Point Park  
 11 a.m. - 6 p.m.: **Golf individual and team play**, Nob North Golf Course

**Saturday, Oct. 12**

8 a.m. - 10 p.m.: **Team softball**, Heritage Point Park; Unified (upper fields 3 and 4); Modified (lower fields 1, 4 and 5); traditional (lower fields 2 and 3)  
 8 a.m. - 2 p.m.: **Softball skills**, Heritage Point Park (upper field 2)  
 8 a.m. - 8 p.m.: **Bocce**,



**Sunday, Oct. 13**

8 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.: **Team softball**, Heritage Point Park, Unified (upper fields 3 and 4); Modified (lower field's 1, 4 and 5); traditional (lower field's 2 and 3)  
 8 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.: **Bocce**, Heritage Point Park (if needed), (upper fields 1 and 5)

### WHAT IF IT RAINS DURING THE EVENTS?

■ Bocce: Will be moved to the Dalton Middle School gymnasium/cafeteria.  
 ■ Long distance running/Walking: Will be moved to the Dalton Middle School gymnasium/cafeteria.

■ Golf play/golf skills: Will be moved inside the clubhouse/restaurant area of the golf course.  
 ■ Softball skills: Will be moved to the Dalton Middle School gymnasium/cafeteria.

■ Softball teams: Will be moved to the Dalton Middle School gymnasium/cafeteria.  
 ■ Cycling: Will be moved to the Dalton Convention and Visitors Bureau.

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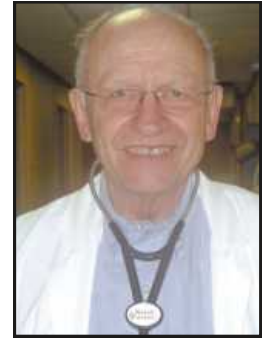
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